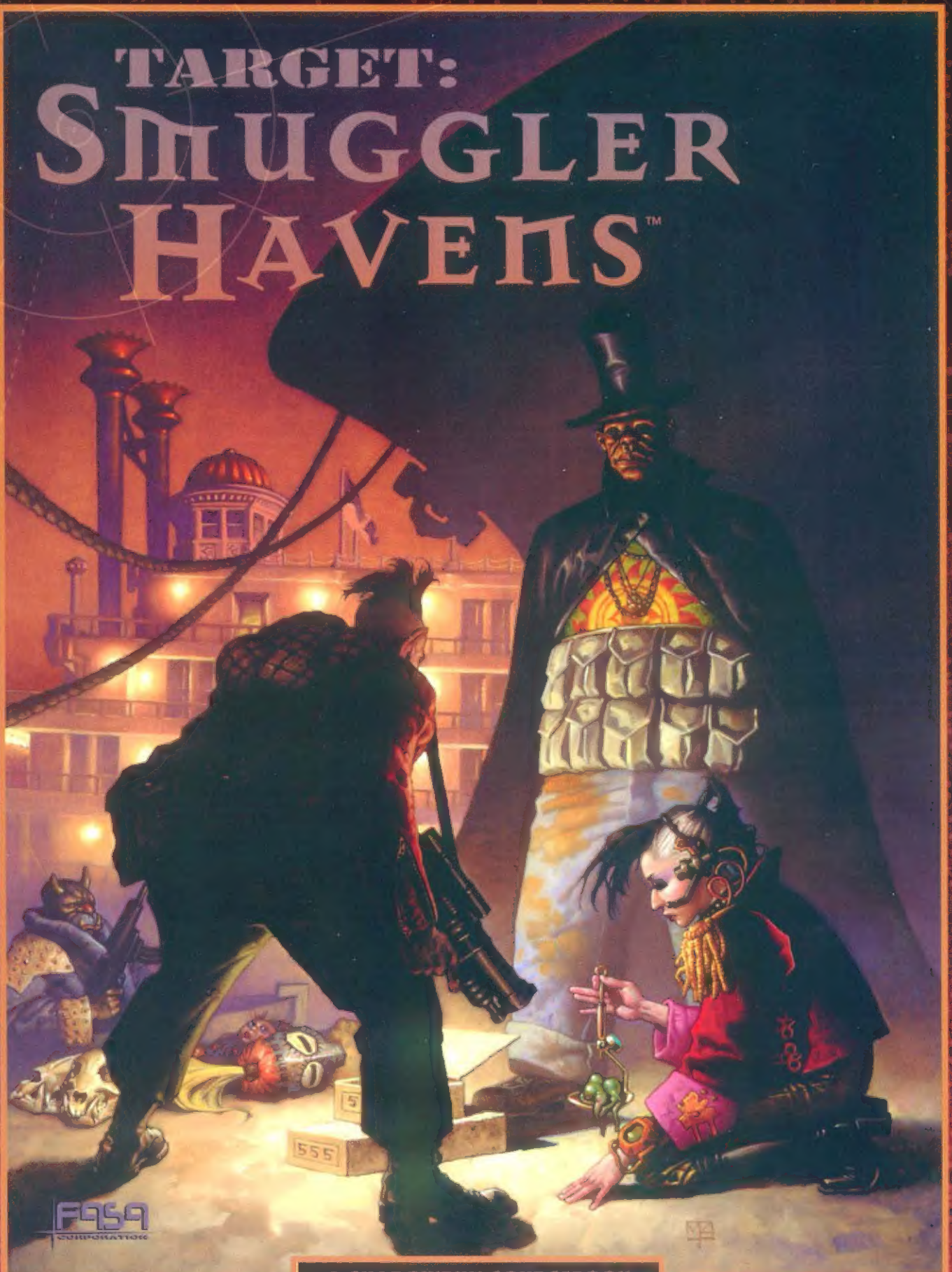
SHADOWRUN 7215

TARGET: SMUGGLER HAVENS™



FASA CORPORATION

A SHADOWRUN SOURCEBOOK

TARGET: SMUGGLER HAVENS

FASA CORPORATION

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TARGET: SMUGGLER HAVENS

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"Hi to our biggest fan, Larry Bomstead!"

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ShadOwLand v.3.0

"I have taken all knowledge to be my province."—Francis Bacon

"Humankind cannot bear very much reality."—T. S. Eliot

A WORD FROM OUR SPONSOR:

It's official—corporations are in season. Get 'em now while the huntin's good! That's right, we spend most of our time running for them, but in a corp war free-for-all, anything goes. For pirates and smugglers especially, this is the ideal time to take advantage of certain targets, as many of them are occupied with more pressing concerns. So all you freelance entrepreneurs out there should take this as a rallying call and kick your hoops into gear, because you don't want to let opportunities like this pass you by.

THE BACK STOCK

The Underworld Sourcebook (Mobs and their jobs)
Target: UCAS (Boston, Chicago, Detroit—up close and personal)
Rigger 2 (Keep up with the SOTA!)
Cyberpirates (The swashbucklin' smuggler's handbook)

• Go to Complete Library Archives

THE DAILY SPECIAL

How to Enjoy Life on the Run!

Smuggling run, that is. Ever wonder where the smugglers scurry to when someone turns on the lights? Now you can see for yourself. We traded our credsticks, shirts, and SINs to get the intel straight from the source on today's most popular free trader refuges—Vladivostok and New Orleans. We also inquired into prime employment opportunities, so if you're thinking of jammin' a t-bird or doing some high-seas raiding, scan the text on favored land routes and underwater aquaspheres.

COMING SOON!

New Seattle (The new face of the old hometown—in all its gory detail)
Magic in the Shadows (The Sixth World undergoes rapid change, and magic is always unpredictable)
The Corporate Download (Corp° info, as only Shadowland can provide)

Mags/Vids | Message Boards | Private Rooms | Misc. Topics | Help | Decker House

News

It's 02.32.11. Do You Know Where Your Meat Body Is?

RENRAKU BITES THE BULLET

Heads up, everyone—Fuchi and Renraku have taken off the gloves and extended the spurs, and Round One goes to Fuchi! After a high-stakes emergency meeting of the Corp Court, Miles Lanier resigned from Renraku and turned himself over to Fuchi security to face charges of industrial espionage. He also unloaded all his Renraku stock at basement prices, all of which has significantly damaged Renraku's stock value. Recent allegations of database glitches and a seeming inability to keep pace with their own just-released technology ain't helping.

BAD BLOOD

The dysfunctional megacorp family may soon need counseling. Tensions are orbital, the low-intensity conflict is escalating, and new corps are jumping into the fray every week. Lucien Cross narrowly avoided death in a freak aviation "accident" last week, and Yamatetsu was given a warm Japanese sendoff as their Tokyo headquarters were bombed ("by Alamos 20K") before they'd finished relocating to Vladivostok. Who's next? Place your bets and click here.

WU WHO?

Wuxing Corp has its eyes on the prize. Nobody had heard of them before the Big Wyrm bought the farm, but now they're kicking hoop and taking names all over the PacRim. They've got the Japanacorps against the wall and Yamatetsu as an ally, and they've almost finished organizing a mob of second-tier PacRim corps into a Pacific Prosperity Group—a force to be reckoned with. So what's their scam? Triad magic? Dragon backing? Immortal elves? You tell us.

MEET THE NEW DON ...

The Commissione has made its decision, and the big winner is Maurice "The Butcher" Bigio as the new Don of Seattle, chosen over Rowena O'Malley. The Mafia bigwigs were forced to step in and make the choice before the newly united Yakuza clans ate up what holdings the mafioso had left. But the yaks have worries of their own now, having claimed independence from the oyabun in Japan ...

INTRODUCTION

Target: Smuggler Havens features multiple locations that share a common aspect: they are each a place where smuggling and shadowrunning go hand in hand, even if they are not actually one and the same. These locations can be used as settings for a smuggling campaign as outlined in **Cyberpirates,** or they can be featured in any campaign as an exotic new location with intriguing shadowrunning options. Two distinct cities, New Orleans in the CAS and Vladivostok in Russia, are highlighted, and information is provided on experimental undersea communities as well as land-based smuggling routes for those itching to pilot a t-bird across North America.

Like previous **Shadowrun** sourcebooks, **Target: Smuggler Havens** is formatted as an electronic document from that fictional world. Scattered throughout the document are comments and additions from readers who seek to correct, expand, corroborate, or contradict the information it presents. Because this "black" information comes from characters within the game universe, players or characters cannot safely assume that these comments are truthful, accurate, considered, or clearly thought through (though they may be all those things). The material in **Target: Smuggler Havens** comes from a variety of sources, most unofficial and all with their own biases built in. These different points of view give gamemasters greater scope to decide in their own games how much of the information presented is accurate, misleading, or false. This allows players and gamemasters a flexible world to set their **Shadowrun** campaigns in.

The two main cities under the spotlight in this product are worlds apart, but very alike in that each is a nexus of all types of smuggling, piracy and shadow ops. New Orleans and Vladivostok may seem like complete opposites, but both are sea ports with main land routes connecting them to other markets. Both cities have strong organized criminal underworlds and both are in proximity to Awakened lands, making them focal points for the smuggling of telesma and magical goods. Beyond these aspects, the similarity ends.

While New Orleans has a very insignificant megacorporate presence, it does have a party atmosphere that makes it a focus of pleasure seekers from around the globe—many of them sararimen and executives. It is a city of complex ecologies, where the rich and wealthy rub shoulders with the dark and seedy, and the vibrant nightlife contrasts with the shadowy lifestyle of the Infected and the Awakened that stalk the swamps and back alleys. The city is a magnet for travelers, drawn by its mystic atmosphere and opulent vice. As North America's primary smuggling port of call, there are very few goods or services that can't be found. If you can't get it in New Orleans, it probably doesn't exist.

Vladivostok, on the other hand, has yet to reclaim the position and power it once had as the Soviet Union's great Pacific military and shipping seaport. The city has been riding a roller coaster for years as the port opened and closed and Russia faltered and drove onward. Since the revolution in Siberia, its connections to the mother country have been tenuous, but its future looks positive. Metahuman exiles from Japan, Korea, and China have flooded the city and created a great melting pot of cultures, lending the city a cosmopolitan air of diversity. This diversity inspired the megacorporation Yamatetsu to relocate their headquarters there, away from the racism of Japan. This new megacorporate presence now must scratch out a niche among the omnipresent Russian military and secret police, the distinctly Russian Vory v Zakone organized criminal syndicate, and smugglers by the boatload. With such an interesting mix, you can rest assured shadowrunners will follow.

Also included in this book is information on undersea communities and experimental aquaspheres. As the corporate world maneuvers around these locations in a fierce competition to collect the prestige and nuyen from the late Dunkelzahn's will, pirates and smugglers target such sites for loot or hostages, or even as trading ports. From the North Atlantic to the Sea of Japan, these isolated communities depend on and fear smugglers and pirates. Their technological value and research innovations make them primary targets for corporations as well as more adventuresome shadowrunners.

Finally, for the first time we outline some of North America's better-known land smuggling routes from Seattle down to New Orleans. This includes trips into Aztlan, Denver, Tir Tairngire and Québec. For the rigger, we offer secret stop-offs where they can share their stories of conquest and border runs. We also provide the gamemaster with a number of rules and options to make those trips a bit harder and more interesting than the rigger may expect.

Target: Smuggler Havens provides gamemasters with enough basic information to create adventures and campaigns in New Orleans and Vladivostok through potential adventure hooks and "story starters" scattered throughout the text. In addition, we introduce several game hooks and special rules to catch your players' interest and motivate them to investigate and visit undersea locations or even to start up land-based smuggling operations. Players will find a wealth of facts, rumors, advice and warnings that they can use to arm their characters with the knowledge they need to survive, collect their pay and start out again.

All the gamemaster information appears in one section at the end of the book. Included in this chapter is information and specific rules for each section, as well as adventure ideas that allow the gamemaster to begin using any of the locations immediately. While the focus of this product is on smuggling and piracy, **Cyberpirates** is not needed to use this product.

NEW ORLEANS: THE BIG EASY

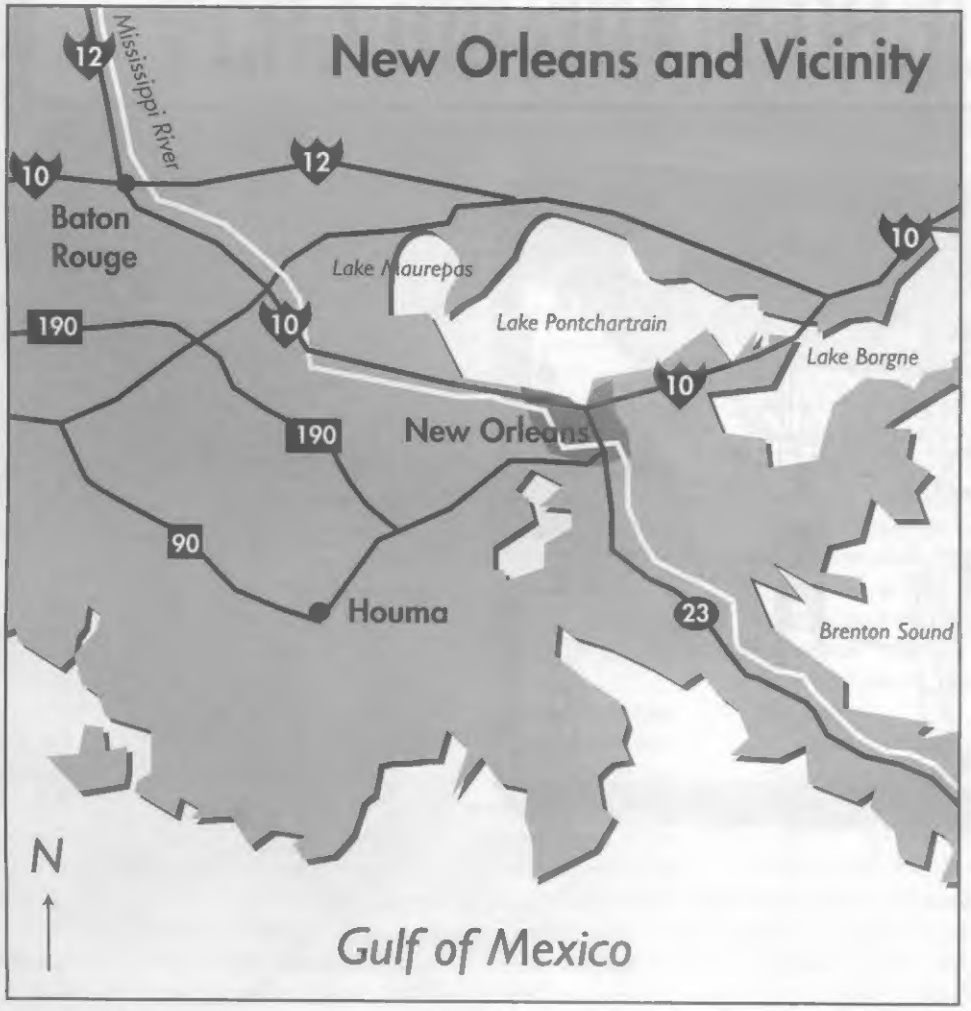
• The first part of this file comes from Toshi Akimura, a noted New Orleans fixer, who wrote it as an introduction to the Big Easy for shadow talent hired from out of town. He's got some other connections as well, which it isn't my business to tell you about—but take it from me, the man knows his stuff. With smuggling on the rise all over, I asked Akimura-*san* if he wouldn't mind posting his little New Orleans guide on Shadowland, as the Crescent City (the preferred nickname, I'm told) just happens to be the smuggling hub of the CAS.

There's also intel on magic, an absolute necessity to know about if you're planning to do biz in New Orleans. Check it out—and, as always, if you've got better intel than we have, post it. It might just save someone's life.

• Captain Chaos
Transmitted: 02-14-59 at 01:22:19 (EST)

New Orleans—my hometown, bless its pleasure-loving heart—is the most important city in the Confederated American States. Never mind Atlanta, which likes to call itself the capital. As far as most of you folks are concerned, the "capital" of any place is where the action's at—and that's here in New Orleans. The Crescent City is the gateway to the Caribbean, and also the smuggling route of choice for goods coming into the CAS along the Mississippi River and through the Gulf of Mexico. It's a city of crime, firmly in the grip of one of the most ruthless Mafia dons in North America. It's a city of vice, with gambling dens, brothels, drinking establishments and the revels of Mardi Gras. It's a city of magic, touched by the mysterious powers of voudoun and home to Awakened critters and spirits that lurk in the dark corners and deep bayous. It's a city of shadows, filled with secret dealings behind closed doors and smugglers plying their trade along the lakes, rivers and shoreline. There's profit to be made here for those who know what they're doing. And for those who don't ... well, at least you'll likely have a good time before you die.

Welcome to New Orleans, bonhomme.



Part of what makes New Orleans such a hot town for biz is the stark division between rich and poor. The big shots throw their money around like cheap Mardi Gras trinkets when they want something done, and lots of ordinary folks need the cred badly enough to sell their own grandmothers for it. You come here, you'll see what I mean. A stone's throw from the partying and moneymaking in the French Quarter, say on Canal Street or in Lafayette Square, squatters beg on the street and muggers lurk in the dark. But we don't let things get us down for long. The famous New Orleans *joie de vivre* plays out in the shadows, too, where folks keep a sharp eye out for the main chance. So if you want to do biz in the Crescent City, you've got to hustle for it. Luckily for you out-of-towners, there's plenty of action to go around. You just have to know where to look.

THE CITY AND ITS PEOPLE

First, the background info—'cause without it, you make mistakes. And New Orleans can be one unforgiving slitch, as I've had cause to learn. Forget the tourist image of the nonstop party town for a minute; there's truth to it, but there's a whole lot more to New Orleans than that.

This place is a smuggling hub second to none in the Gulf region, with goods passing through on their way to and from the Carib League, the CAS, Aztlan, the UCAS and occasionally even the Native American Nations. You can get just about anything you want here, for the right price, of course. The latest Cal hots, top-of-the-line Ares guns, pricey Awakened plants from the Everglades or the Florida Keys, even bootleg rum from the Carib for transport to places where the powers that be never met a drink they didn't loathe … you name it, somebody somewhere around these parts either has it or knows who's bringing it in and when. Some of the smuggling goes hand in hand with a booming "entertainment" industry; plenty of the poor slots working the brothels and so-called nightclubs got brought here in the back of a truck or the hold of a ship from somewhere else. (Not pretty, but there's an awful lot of goings-on in the darker corners of my city that would make a hardened criminal queasy.)

● Here's a quickie history lecture for the curious (and for those smart enough to know that there's no such thing as useless information). New Orleans began as a collection of shacks on a disease-ridden marsh in 1718, but its prime location along the Mississippi River soon led to rapid development. With the first mass importation of African slaves in the 1720s, the city's unique character began to take shape. The French and Spanish who colonized the place started out as fierce rivals, but economic necessity forced them to learn to live together. By the end of the eighteenth century, the Port of New Orleans was a flourishing haunt of smugglers, gamblers, prostitutes and pirates. (How little things change in a couple of centuries, neh?)

In the first years of the nineteenth century, New Orleans experienced two rapid changes in government, passing back into French control in 1801 and then being sold to America under the Louisiana Purchase two years later. The American takeover literally split the city in two. Local Creoles saw the Americans who migrated to New Orleans as crass and uncouth; the blacks, upon whom they placed previously unknown restrictions, hated them. Unwelcome in the French Quarter, the newcomers were forced to settle in the areas now known as the Central Business District and the Garden District. Canal Street divided the two sectors, and even today locals call the median strip in the middle of the main roads "the neutral ground."

Creoles and Americans came together briefly in 1815 to defeat the British in the Battle of New Orleans, the last real battle of the War of 1812 (unknown to either side, the war had already ended—news took awhile to travel back then). New Orleans' subsequent "Golden Age" as a finance center for the cotton-pro-

ducing South lasted until the Civil War. The flood of immigrants during this time included Irish, Germans and Sicilians, the latter of whom brought the Mafia to the city. By 1890, New Orleans had become a Mafia stronghold, and La Cosa Nostra remains a powerful presence today. As the North industrialized and other southern cities grew, the fortunes of New Orleans took a downturn. Both the coming of the railroads, which diminished the importance of the Mississippi as a trade route, and the abolition of slavery marked the end of the glory days.

New Orleans rose again, however, as it always seems to do. Its new lease on life came partly from tourism, as jazz music echoed from the bars and bordellos and Mardi Gras became a major tourist attraction. Oil and petrochemicals made up the rest, until the economic slump of the 1950s pushed New Orleans well behind other U.S. cities. The oil crash of the early 1980s gave the city yet another battering, from which it had barely begun to recover when the various catastrophes of the early twenty-first century struck. Throughout it all, however, battle-scarred New Orleans refused to lie down and die

New Orleans strongly backed the formation of the Confederated American States and even made a bid to become the capital of the newly formed nation in 2034. The people of New Orleans have never quite gotten over being beaten out by Atlanta, and they often call their Crescent City (somewhat sarcastically) "the cultural and spiritual capital of the CAS." The various illicit businesses for which New Orleans has always been famous boomed after secession, as the CAS government generally has had more pressing concerns than cracking down on smuggling and organized crime in a place that much of the South still regards as "sin city." The cynical-minded (like me) might say that the CAS government deliberately allows New Orleans to do whatever it wants, so long as some of the money goes into CAS coffers; if the best illegal opportunities are there, then all the lowlifes and shadowrunners and other assorted criminals will migrate to the Crescent City and leave the rest of the CAS alone. But then, that's just my opinion.

◗ Captain Chaos

Transmitted. 02-14-59 at 03:16:10 (EST)

BUSINESS—LEGIT AND OTHERWISE

New Orleans is not a corporate city in the same way as Seattle, San Francisco or Boston. You're not going to find giant arcologies dominating the skyline here. In fact, you're not going to find much of anything megacorporate, except for some branch offices and such drek (plus some smaller companies that they own without making a big deal out of it, mostly in biotech). The big boys keep their HQs in Atlanta, where they can use their cred to grease the wheels of government. That lets the smaller corporate fish abound in this pond. Petrochemical and natural gas companies have installations inland and along the Gulf Coast; major players include United Oil, Gulfstar, Shiawase Petrochemical and Gaeatronics.

Biotechnology is another significant industry. New Orleans is basically a bio-researcher's dreamland. Droves of these techno-dweebs set up shop to study the rich ecosystems of the bayous, river deltas and Gulf for new Awakened species or anything they might turn into patents and products for the biotech firms and their parent companies. Several biotech companies, like Biogene Technologies and Envirotech, belong to larger corporate interests like Yakashima and Shiawase, respectively. Universal Omnitech has a lab just outside New Orleans, along with Cross Biomedical, Seretech, Phoenix Biotechnologies and others.

◗ Some of the "Awakened" critters in the rivers and bayous are actually genetic experiments, either created as "guard dogs" for corporate facilities or failures dumped in the swamps and allowed to breed. You can run into some pretty twisted and strange things out there at night.

◗ Cap'n Gillie

◗ Especially if you have a bottle or two of 40-proof with you.

◗ Deegan

New Orleans also has a growing music and recording industry, based around the numerous nightclubs and bars where bands of all descriptions have been playing for years. Jazz, rock, zydeco, ska, voudoun rap ... you name it, someone here's probably playing it and hoping to become the next big hit. Entertainment corps like MegaMedia, Brilliant Genesis, Amalgamated Studios and others have talent scouts and watchers keeping tabs on every place from the famous Commander's Palace to the little dive in the heart of the poorest neighborhood, all set to snap up the right act on the verge of taking off.

◗ I notice Toshi ain't givin' the lowdown on local corps, so I figured I'd better. Got data on three of 'em, one in each industry my bud Toshi mentioned. General info's all very well, but it don't get you the cred. For that, you need some skinny—so here goes. Anybody got anything to add, post it.

Gulfstar
President/CEO: Jacob Keene

Gulfstar made it big in petrochemicals; they're best-known for coming up with more efficient ways to make high-performance fuels. What most people don't know is that Gulfstar also owns the Delta Queen riverboat line. Once upon a time, Delta Queen boats took tourists on dinner-dance jazz cruises down a short stretch of the Mississippi. In fact, they still do, but they've gone beyond dinner and dancing to gambling, the occasional floating brothel (usually camouflaged as a "private party") and one helluva lot of smuggling up and down the river. Word on the street is, Jake's got an arrangement with Dona Miriam Kozlowski, he moves goods for the Mafia, and she lets him keep a fair chunk of his gambling profits. Whether the "arrangement" goes beyond the professional, it's not worth my while to say. (Last thing you want to do 'round these parts is get the Dona mad at you. Ain't healthy.)

Cross Biomedical
Division Head: Rick Leland
Chief Products/Services: Biotechnological research, bioware, pharmaceuticals

This branch office reports to the biomed division of Cross Applied Technologies that has its HQ up in Boston. However, Sandra Wright (who runs the Boston end of things) lets Ricky treat the New Orleans office as his own little fiefdom. Lucky for her, Ricky wants nothing more than to make the next Big Discovery in biotech, so his near-total autonomy doesn't do the parent company any harm. So long as his people keep producing and don't rack up any bad PR for Cross Corp., Ricky can do what he wants.

What he wants, mostly, is to delve into the bayou and turn up something that'll make him famous. The New Orleans division is heavily into biotech and biomed research, every scrap of which they patent even if there is no immediate way to make it a marketable product. The corp sends lots of boats out in search of new Awakened beasties, plants with properties no one's ever heard of before, or anything else that might come in handy for the boys back in the labs. They hire a lot of guides from among the local Cajuns, though that hasn't kept at least a few Cross boats from disappearing in the murky swamp. (Ricky tends not to report those, but my brother runs tours of the bayous during daylight hours, and he knows a few folks who signed on for Cross expeditions and didn't live to regret it.)

Blue Dog Tunes
President/CEO: Mariah O'Mara

This little recording company's come a long way in the five years since it pressed its first chip. Nobody figured it'd survive, what with all the competition from bigger outfits like MegaMedia and Brilliant Genesis—but Mariah's got a rep for being as scrappy as the little dog she named her business for, plus an instinct for what'll sell that none of the big boys can quite match. She's a fixture in the French Quarter, hitting this or that nightclub or watering hole to have a drink and a listen. Just look for the little dwarf lady with the too-loud clothes and the wild hat. Why bother, you ask (unless, of course, you happen to love good music)? Simple. Before she turned to legit business, Mariah worked the shadows, and she knows fraggin' near half the talent in the city. You want to set up shop in New Orleans and need someone to point you in the right direction, talk to Mariah. And buy her a drink or two first—she hates cheap people.
◉ Lafitte

◉ I've heard some interesting rumors about our tour guide here, Mr. Akimura, and Cross Applied Technologies. Seems they've had some conflicting, ah, opinions in the past. Anyone got the dirt?
◉ Trudy

On the shady side of the business world, the largest criminal industries in New Orleans are vice and smuggling. The vice industry needs plenty of illegal goods to keep its wheels (and everything else) well greased, but the vast majority of contraband is passing through on its way to somewhere else. New Orleans is a "gateway city" for smuggled goods; stuff like electronics and telesma from the Carib League and Aztlan go north, while goods from NAN territory, the CAS and the UCAS head south along the Mississippi River to Lake Pontchartrain. The Lake (as we call it), the bayous and the Gulf shoreline south of the metroplex are riddled with smuggler's coves and havens to hide in. CAS border patrols make a half-hooped effort to keep a lid on smuggling, but patrolling is easier said than done (you try tracking down a little bitty smuggler's boat in the twists and turns of the bayou at night, or keeping the whole wide mouth of the Mississippi under your eye). Plus, the CAS government figures it has more important things to worry about than shipments of beetles and other "victimless" black-market goods ... for example, making sure its own smuggling runs go off without a hitch. Arms running to places like the Yucatan has become a favorite pastime of several people in the CAS and UCAS governments in recent years, though no one will ever admit it.

Most of the smuggling in and out of New Orleans is on the water, but not the wide-open waters most of you likely have in mind. A lot of smugglers slog through the treacherous sandbars and coves of the Gulf, or the south Louisiana swamps and bayous. Swamp buggies and similar flat-bottomed boats are common smuggler craft, along with various types of hovercraft; the latter can maneuver through dangerously shallow waters that would beach or sink most other boats.

◉ Boats are better than hovercraft for maneuvering through the bayous and rivers. Hovercraft are too touchy and can't cope with half-submerged debris (of which there's a lot in bayou country). Hover drivers tend to think they can zip right over anything, and that attitude can get them in real trouble. Give me a flat-bottom swamp buggy like the *Drowned Rat* any ol' time.
◉ Swamp Rat

◉ You're out of your sodden brain, Rat. Hovercraft are perfect for running through the wet-dry-who-knows terrain of the swamps, coves and shores. You can go from dry land to open water without even slowing down, and any pilot worth the nuyen he's being paid knows how to avoid the hazards. Boats get grounded, stuck and punched full of holes by floating logs, not to mention flipped over by the occasional behemoth or mega-swamp gator. No thanks.
◉ Smuggler Blue

◉ You've gotta know the terrain to get around in the New Orleans smuggling biz. There are hundreds of small rivers, streams and coves, plus thousands of square miles of bayou and backwoods territory to navigate. In some places the waterways and terrain seem to change overnight. I've run into so-called professionals who stashed their goods in some godforsaken cove in the depths of the swamp and then promptly forgot how to find their way back to retrieve them. It pays to have decent mapping systems and a working knowledge of the area where you're going to be operating. You have to know it at least as well as the local authorities do, if not better. The bayou folk often make a living as guides and boat pilots, so it pays to have decent relations with them. Don't rely on them, though, unless you like having someone else holding your reins.
◉ Nowhere Girl

◗ If you have any problems with your vehicle, I recommend calling the Crescent Wrench Crew. They're the best group of mechanics and riggers in the region, and they know all the ins and outs regarding smuggling. Most of 'em are women, too, which means they have more than half a brain cell to work with.
◗ Kaldi

LOCAL FOLKS

In the cultural jambalaya that I call home, you need to know the people as well as the place. Otherwise you could end up mortally insulting the fixer you were counting on to move your stuff or the contact from whom you need vital information. In addition to the region's original Native American tribes, natives of New Orleans include descendants of numerous settler groups: French, Spanish, English, German, Acadians, West Indians, Africans, Irish and Italians, just to name a few. The original French colonists who settled New Orleans were quickly joined by the Spanish and Acadians, and later by French aristocrats fleeing slave revolts in the West Indies or the horrors of the French Revolution. As part of Louisiana's French legacy, counties are still called "parishes" and the Napoleonic Code rather than common law holds sway in the state's courtrooms. (Remember that if you ever find yourself in one of said courtrooms. Under this style of law, the defense attorney isn't necessarily on your side. His or her job is to cooperate with the prosecutor and the judge to find the truth. That means Joe Public Defender isn't going to tie himself into a thousand legal knots just to get you off.)

◗ The judge ain't your friend, neither. Forget all the impartiality buldrek you're used to. Best thing you can do in these parts is buy a judge; you pay him well enough, and he'll "interpret" any facts dug up as much in your favor as possible
◗ Bayou Babe

◗ That infamous Good Ol' Boys network thrives here still, which can work to your advantage if you know the right redne—er, person. And don't be surprised if your metatype turns out to be more of a crime than whatever you did to get arrested; plenty of these legal types are card-carrying Humanis or Archconservatives
◗ Duked Out

◗ Where I come from, the "judge" at your "trial" is likely to be the guy you just fragged over. And he makes his judicial pronouncements with heavy weapons.
◗ Miami Dice

Ironically, the Spanish built many of the colonial structures in the French Quarter, and Spanish is still spoken in some communities—particularly in St. Bernard Parish below New Orleans. Hundreds of German families, recruited as laborers in 1719, settled upriver from New Orleans along a section of the Mississippi still known as the Côte des Allemands (German Coast). The parishes north of Lake Pontchartrain and east of the Mississippi were once a part of British West Florida, occupied by English planters and military in the 1700s. Free blacks amassed some of Louisiana's largest land holdings prior to the Civil War, and their descendants have made major contributions to Louisiana culture.

The people that most readily come to mind when out-of-towners speak of New Orleans are the Cajuns—descendants, according to the dictionary, of French-speaking Acadians. That definition's only partly correct. Cajun culture began with the Acadians, but it didn't end there. After their brutal expulsion from Nova Scotia in 1755 by the British military, Acadians sought refuge in south Louisiana and intermixed with other European as well as Native American ethnic groups. Cajuns also borrowed much of their culture from their Creole neighbors. All these groups added their own touches to the distinctive culture the world knows as "Cajun." They're actually still assimilating, this time picking up elements of Japanese culture from the large number of Japanese tourists who visit New Orleans. Cajun culture is a sort of "ethnic gumbo," throwing together all the elements of the Cajuns' mixed heritage with a dash of spice that makes it their own.

What Creole means depends on which source you consult. The sons and daughters of the first settlers in Louisiana—those born in the colony—were called Creoles to distinguish them from the French and Spanish immigrants. Originally, Creole meant "local" or "native" and referred to people and things as well as to ways of doing things. Creole tomatoes were more likely to be fresh and vine-ripened. Creole houses were raised above the damp ground and adapted to keep the heat outside. The Creole French language reflected the realities of Louisiana life.

I've also heard that the term "Creole" was used by the light-skinned blacks or mulattos of New Orleans who were allowed to own property and work as artisans (the *gens de couleur libre* or "free persons of color"). The word Creole nowadays is sometimes used to describe French-speaking blacks from southwest Louisiana.

Still, some whites in south Louisiana describe themselves as Creole and bristle at any association with Africa. So don't just assume that every local white is a Cajun and every local black is a Creole. Find out who you're talking to before you open your mouth—especially if you want in on the smuggling rackets in this town. Local people know a lot about the lay of the land, physically and otherwise. Plenty of swamp dwellers make a tidy living guiding smuggling boats through the bayous, warehousing shipments and providing fuel and repairs for people who aren't looking to put into a legitimate port. They guard their livelihoods jealously and they don't often talk to outsiders. If you want to deal with them, get an introduction from someone they already know. And you'll find it easier to get that introduction if you don't come off like some damned Yankee with a big gun and an attitude, who neither knows nor cares a frag about the history and culture that shaped these people.

◗ Man, if I wanted a lecture, I'da called my mother. How does this Jap slag know so much about black and white people in New Orleans, anyway?
◗ Chromatica

◗ Because he lives there, metalhead. Probably for years, if he's a fixer with a solid enough rep for ol' Cap to trust his intel. Where's

the law of the universe that says a guy with a Japanese name can't know anything about non-Asians? Or are you one of those drekheads who go around wearing T-shirts that say, "It's a (fill-in-the-blank) Thing; You Wouldn't Understand"?
• Eponine

• Toshi Akimura ... I've seen that name somewhere before.
• Media Watcher

• It really pays to get in good with the local people, especially the ones in the bayou. Some bayou shamans can call up spirits to conceal and protect operations in their territory. I worked one run through the bayous with a Cajun conjure-man who spoke to the spirits to guide us. Smoothest damn run I've ever been on. No trouble from CAS border patrols and not a peep out of any swamp critter the whole way. I had an eerie feeling of something big lurking just under the water the whole time, like my rig was riding on the back of a giant beast cutting through the swamp. I never saw it and I didn't want to, but it did the job
• Swamp Rat

• No drek, these guys are creepy. I've heard some of 'em follow totems like gator, snake and turtle, but some of 'em follow weirder ones like spider (isn't that a bug?). Not only are most of these Cajuns wiz at summoning spirits, but they can call forth other critters, too—living trees, plant-men, giant spiders and even nasty animated piles of swamp muck that can swallow a person whole.
• Fisher

• Sounds fishy to me. I'd bet those things you saw were spirits.
• Magister

• Something else you might need to know about—the racial balance hereabouts. There's a lot of metahumans in the general area, but most of them live in the outlying parishes or bayou country rather than in the central city. Not entirely by choice, either. The Cajuns and other bayou folk are more accepting of metahumans in general, but a lot of the humans who warm their butts in city council seats feel especially uncomfy about the high ork population. Close to half the local metas are orks, and the humans prefer to keep central New Orleans clear of "ugly goblins" so the tourists won't have to see them. So they boot most of the metas out of the downtown and lakefront districts. If you're metahuman and you insist on coming here, understand that you'll stick out like a submachine gun in a kindergarten class when you stroll down the streets of downtown New Orleans.
• Aunt NOLA
"Welcome to New Orleans. Now go home."

• Except for Mardi Gras. Then all bets are off, and metahumans pour into the city. During the carnival, everyone's part of the party. You can never be sure if someone's face is a mask or their own without close, personal inspection. Magical illusions and disguises only confuse things even more.
• Jongeleur

◗ Do a few days of acceptance make up for years of rejection? I don't think so.
◗ KnightMare

◗ I know this one slag, named Brick. He's a black ork and a very polite fragger—until he gets angry. His hobby is dressing up and dining out at the snazzy places that get all twitchy at having an ork on their premises. He stays as calm and respectable as he can; he expects the delayed service and petty "wrong order" tricks. He usually lasts about half an hour before he starts throwing a fit. Then security steps in to throw him out, and he redecorates the place with 'em. I guess it's his own way of educating the public against racism.
◗ Face

◗ It's not just the humans who have a problem with "ugly" metas. Other metas do, too. Remember the snap of Councilman Rainier D'Arcy that the screamsheets published during last year's election campaign, when he went to visit a local homeless shelter to prove what a caring soul he was? D'Arcy's an elf, and every bit as snotty as the stereotype says. Some little ork girl climbed up on his lap just as the cameras went off. The pic went out in the evening edition, with D'Arcy looking at that poor kid like she was some kind of walking disease. Guess us ugly folk don't impress him much.
◗ PoBoy

◗ It's not that bad. I've never been hassled, and I spend tons of time in the tourist-packed French Quarter. Best place to pick up interesting information, if you catch my drift. I'm a troll, BTW.
◗ Sun King

◗ They're probably scared of you, big guy.
◗ Delta Angel

The NOPS

Another group of people you need to know—or at least know *about*—are the NOPS, a.k.a. New Orleans Police Services, Inc. Rather than employing a security provider like Lone Star or Knight Errant, the city of New Orleans chose to privatize its municipal police service some thirty years ago and make the city the new company's prime client. This incestuous little relationship suits the NOPS fine. They know they have a sweet deal, and holding on to it is their top priority. In practice, that means keeping other security services out of New Orleans as much as possible.

◗ Plenty of people around here joke that NOPS is short for "no cops." The service spends more time trying to protect its cushy arrangement with the city government and keeping corps like Lone Star and Eagle out of the metroplex than they do chasing criminals or keeping the peace. Good news for shadowrunners, no?
◗ Lady Jestyr

◗ Only if you're on the right side of the NOPS, which can change from day to day. If you take care of your business quietly and don't get caught, you probably won't get much trouble from them. But if you make too much noise or (gods forbid) cause a public outcry, the "loyal and efficient" officers of the NOPS will come down on you like a ton of plascrete. The same is true if your run involves biz at cross-purposes with the NOPS or the metroplex government. As always, it pays to know which way the wind is blowing.
◗ The Holy Bowler
"STEEE-RIKE!"

The NOPS provide the city of New Orleans with basic police services, keeping the peace and handling law enforcement within city limits. Individual businesses and citizens can also purchase "premium" coverage, a legalized bribe to get the NOPS to patrol an area more vigorously or to pay more attention to certain alarms. Some things never change; the NOPS, like the public police force that preceded them, have limited resources. Naturally, they reserve the lion's share of these for the higher-paying customers. Never snark off your meal ticket, right? The big wheels can also get away with murder—sometimes literally—or at least get the NOPS to look the other way for an additional "service charge."

Not surprisingly, crime rates in New Orleans are on the high side. However, the vast majority of crimes are either smuggling-related or perpetrated against tourists. Dumb out-of-towners who wander down the wrong side street get slugged and rolled or shot for their credsticks; locals, who know enough to stay where they belong, generally feel safe. New Orleans is a real live city, not a theme park. The people who get hurt most often are the ones who forget that.

◗ The NOPS are so corrupt it's funny. A major part of their budget comes from graft—the Mafia and the krewes (large, powerful gangs that often specialize in a particular type of crime) paying them off to look the other way, plus the countless Officer Bonhommes who spend their days collecting something on the side. They've even got a name for it here: lagniappe, "a little something extra."
◗ Soul Donut

◗ I wonder how much this Akimura joker's given the NOPS to sweeten his deals. He seems to know exactly how the system works.
◗ Clean Gene

◗ Wouldn't be much use on Shadowland if he didn't. Price of doing biz, I call it.
◗ Reality Czech

◗ Lone Star, Knight Errant and a couple other security corps have started an interesting new practice in New Orleans. They've been quietly encouraging "freelance law enforcement" on the part of employees who happen to be in the city during their "off hours." The corp authorizes the use of corporate facilities and resources for employees wanting to "do their civic duty in controlling crime and corruption on the streets of Our Fair City." So off-duty Lone Star or KE cops, in plain clothes and driving an unmarked car, can make a "citizen's arrest" of criminals they catch in the act or get sufficient evidence against. Naturally, the NOPS whine long and

loud about this, but corporate management at the Star or wherever just shrugs and says they're encouraging civic-mindedness. Who could object to that?

Behind the scenes, the whole thing is a security-corp operation. The "volunteers" get paid from concealed funds. The security corps get to show up the NOPS as incompetent, thereby driving a wedge between the police force and the metroplex government. You can't buy the kind of advertising that a "heroic off-duty collar" gets on the newsnets. Plan to see some serious shadow-action between the major security companies, the NOPS and local syndicates in the near future. Those of you planning operations in New Orleans, take note. You might not be dealing with one group of corrupt, incompetent cops; three, four or more security companies might all be competing to make you a trophy in their latest game of one-upmanship.

◗ Aunt NOLA

"Welcome to New Orleans. Now go home."

◗ I'd say the sec corps are lucky none of their "off-duty" heroes have accidentally waxed any civilians yet. There'd be a public outcry for sure, maybe even riots. Drek, I just realized that means the NOPS would be doing riot control and looking like the bad guys anyway. Geez, I should shut my trap before I give them more ideas.

◗ Copwatch

◗ I can top that. Some security corps (including NOPS) are hiring shadowrunners and gangers to "play cop" and take down some fellow criminals while giving the corp the credit, or paying them to pose as employees of another corp while they go about their illegal business (causing all kinds of public-relations problems for their rivals). A shadow team in the city recently hung a really nice frame around Lone Star for the Universal Omnitech break-in. The corp is madder than hell, and Lone Star is scrambling for explanations. They're offering a 25,000-nuyen bounty for the heads of the shadowrunners involved

◗ Caric

THE GOODS (AND NOT-SO-GOODS)

What's in and what's out in the New Orleans smuggling biz? Just about anything's in, bonhommes. You can find almost anything on its way through the metroplex to points north and south. Naturally, some goods bring higher prices than others—and higher risks as well. Most smugglers who come through these parts mix and match shipments so as not to squander cargo space. You've heard the expression "time is money"? Well, to a good smuggler, space is money. No point in running half-empty across hostile territory when you can carry a little something extra that'll make the difference between profit and a waste of fuel.

◗ Just be careful your Johnson doesn't find out. Some Johnsons don't like the idea of your carrying any goods except their own. They consider it "unnecessary collateral risk" (that's what one Johnson I know called it). Of course, what a Johnson doesn't know can't hurt you. Unless he finds out

◗ Muddy Waters

As a businessman with a wide range of interests, I can tell you what sells and where, and what you can pick up in New Orleans. You'll see the most action in vice, arms smuggling, organlegging and talislegging.

◗ Interesting list for a simple "businessman" ... .

◗ Clean Gene

VICE RACKETS

People call this place "sin city," and lots of important folks pay big nuyen to come have fun in this particular grown-ups' playground. The New Orleans metroplex lost its last bid for respectability when Atlanta became the capital of the CAS, and now more than ever the city's motto is *"Laissez les bon temps rouler"* (let the good times roll!).

Since the twentieth century, the city has gotten more crowded and glitzy, but also more vibrant than ever. The easy availability of just about any illicit thing the heart desires lures corpsuits and their friends by the planeload to come and party. And, as everyone knows, at least as many deals get made in the barroom and the bedroom as in the boardroom. So if you're looking to get the inside straight on how Corp A is planning to frag up Corp B, or you've been hired to snag evidence of a high-placed suit in a compromising position, the world of New Orleans vice is for you. This is also your bailiwick if you're a smuggler of beetles, other mindbenders or joytoys for jaded execs—provided, of course, that you're willing to be owned lock, stock and gun barrel by the Mafia families that control those "business enterprises."

The Crescent City Mafia

Wherever there's vice, there's organized crime, and the New Orleans Mafia dominates the most profitable rackets in the metroplex. If you want to smuggle anything illegal for people to have fun with, you're going to have to deal with the mob. That means a big chunk of the profit goes into the Mafia's pocket, not yours. The few smugglers fool enough to try going it alone have ended up with a permanent view of the bottom of Lake Pontchartrain. You pay your money and you take your chances. Personally, I find it's not worth messing with the mob no matter how much they're paying.

◗ Sez you, chum. Me, I got no problem with the Family. They pay better than most, and the work just keeps comin'. Plus, they look out for you. Catch some corp Johnson doin' that!

◗ Godfather

◗ If some corp Johnson treats you bad or starts asking you to do stuff you don't like, you can quit working for him. You work for the Mafia, you're theirs for life. People who try to quit get sent off with a nice pair of cement shoes.

◗ Skylark

The New Orleans Mafia operates under the watchful eye and iron hand of Miriam Kozlowski, *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, "the beautiful lady without mercy." Never were truer words spoken. Miriam is the sole female don in North America, and she didn't get where she is by being soft or stupid. She's a cold-hearted

slitch and a hard-edged businesswoman. Efforts by rival families to depose her have met with bloody reprisals, including a nasty one a couple of years ago on Mardi Gras when Kozlowski's people murdered several rival Mafiosi, execution-style. That's how she earned her other nickname, *La Dame du Morte*, "the Lady of Death." The rivals apparently took the point; nobody's made any noises about dumping Miriam lately. The Kozlowski family and the rest of the mob are major employers of shadowrunners and smugglers, but don't cross them or get tangled up in their internal politics. Those who do tend to find life nasty, brutish and extremely short.

Miriam inherited her position as *capa* of the Kozlowski family and dona of New Orleans from her mother, Paula, the first female Mafia don in history. Paula took over the position from her husband Stan "Gumbo" Kozlowski, the previous don of New Orleans. Stan and Paula were tighter than stockings on a troll and worked hand in hand on everything. They even planned her takeover in case of his sudden death and had the foundation all laid out when his heart seized up. The other Families weren't too keen on the idea, but they backed down after Paula capped the most vocal challengers. Soon after, the Commissione recognized her as capa of New Orleans.

Paula and Stan had no sons, so Paula arranged for Miriam to take the reins when the time came. Miriam faced more opposition than her mother had, as the other families were expecting it this time, but Paula was such a skilled deal-maker and Miriam so bewitching and intelligent that efforts to block her succession came to nothing. In the years since taking over from Mommy Dearest, Miriam's done her job so well that lots of New Orleans mobsters take pride in being led by North America's only female dona.

Unmarried and without children, Miriam is grooming her niece, Pamela Rodenbush, to succeed her. Pamela's led a much less sheltered life than the typical "Mafia princess," and Miriam involves her in Family business as much as possible.

● Pamela ain't Miriam's niece, she's her cousin. Keep the Family ties straight, eh?
● Godfather

● Actually, they're more closely related than that. Ever wonder the real reason why Carlo Mossino, the elder son of the Mossino Family, got whacked in '36? He bought it right after word on his "indiscretions" with Miriam came to light, and she got shipped away to a "private school" for a little less than a year right after his death. Mysteriously, Paula Kozlowski's brother and his wife had an unexpected baby right about the time Miriam returned. Go ahead and connect the dots. Pamela may not know the truth, but plenty of local Mafiosi do. Of course, anyone who values his life keeps quiet about it.
● Bourbon

● The Mossino family is more than a little concerned about Pamela's parentage. If she really is Carlo's daughter, then she has a semilegitimate claim to some position in the Mossino family, which she might use to cement her position as heir apparent to La Belle Dame.
● Le Boit

Two other significant Mafia families in New Orleans take their marching orders from the Kozlowskis: the Mossinos and the Romeros. The Mossinos are primarily Sicilian, the Romeros Spanish-Creole. The Mossinos dominate the gambling business along the lakefront; the Romeros are most heavily involved in river smuggling and activities on the outskirts of the downtown area. Both families have done reasonably well under Kozlowski leadership, but some traditionalists still bridle at having a woman for a boss.

The don of the Mossinos is Eduardo "Silverhand" Mossino, younger brother of Carlo, who stepped into Carlo's shoes when the heir apparent was killed in a gang war more than twenty years ago. Eduardo is an old-fashioned Mafioso except for his fondness for cyberware. He gets his name from his cybernetic right hand, which he never bothers to hide and with which he literally crushes people who oppose him. Eduardo dislikes Miriam and makes no secret of it, but he admires her strength of will. That and his family's relative prosperity have so far kept him from opposing her openly.

Michael "The Prince" Romero, head of the Romero family, staunchly supports Miriam despite objections within his own camp. Rumor has it he's smitten with her beauty and strength, but the dona would never get involved with him for one simple reason: despite his legendary charms, he can do little to advance her position. So she keeps Michael dangling and uses him to hold on to the Romero family as allies. Not being a complete fool, the Prince has lately grown wise to the game and has shown signs of shifting his attentions to Pamela. How La Belle Dame will take this is anyone's guess.

● I hear Romero wants to arrange a marriage between himself and Pamela Rodenbush so that he can become the next don. Things might not work out the way he thinks, though; word is that Pamela means to succeed her "cousin" Miriam no matter what Marriage might complicate Pamela's claim, but I doubt it'll stop her cold.
● Cajun Cowboy

Casinos and Other Playgrounds

Gambling is legal in New Orleans only on the water, not on land, so all the casinos and gambling palaces are on riverboats, piers and islands (which are considered "on the water" according to legal precedent). In the city proper, you'll find more bars per square mile than in nearly any other plex on the planet, along with legal and not-so-legal "hospitality suites," BTL dens, nightclubs and other party zones.

The gambling business is the vice I know best, being something of a gambling man myself. Most casinos are located in "floating palaces," old-style riverboats that try to recapture the decadent charm of the days of riverboat gamblers and cardsharps. They anchor along the Mississippi or cruise the river like painted ladies in search of companionship. Other gambling establishments exist on piers along the lakefront or out on the Lake. The Dragon's Lair is the largest lakefront casino, along with the Belle Fortune, Golden Paradise and Bourbon Palace. All of these larger casinos also feature shows and other entertainment to attract tourists and other guests.

● Scuttlebutt says Akimura owns the Dragon's Lair casino, an inheritance from Dunkelzahn. If so, he knows whereof he speaks
● Reginald

● That's it! The will! Akimura got the Big D's French Quarter properties and a whopping trust fund. Must've done something pretty spectacular for the old wyrm to rate that.
● Media Watcher

● So that's the connection the Captain wouldn't talk about. Interesting.
● La Marquise

● I'd bet on a Mafia connection, myself—maybe in addition to whatever he did for Dunk. How the frag else does a "businessman" know so much inside dirt on Family politics?
● Flanders Moll

● He was one of the big lizard's pet "watchers," keeping tabs on everything that went down in the Crescent City shadows. Spying on us for the dragon. I just don't understand how any self-respecting human could do that.
● Jumbo

● Buildrek. Akimura could've been anybody The Big D left lots of stuff to ordinary stiffs—like the guy who got the peanut-butter cookie recipes. Not everybody who got something was some kind

of Secret Agent Man. What is it about dragons that makes people go nuts with conspiracy theories?

• D. Bunker

• One word for you, D, my man: Lofwyr.

• Miz Liz

One form of gambling that's been catching on in New Orleans lately is blood sports imported from Aztlan. Folks around here don't care much for Aztlan in the abstract (not surprising, given the stormy relations between Aztlan and the CAS), but that doesn't stop Azzie blood sports from being a huge draw for jaded corporate high rollers looking for a unique thrill. Some casinos and clubs operate secret "entertainment centers" where pit fighting between humans and metahumans is the star attraction. Generally, one-on-one fights between two opponents of different races are the most popular. Some places stage animal fights or man-against-beast brawls, but these are rarely as popular as the ones where you get to see a couple of people beating each other to a bloody pulp. Some pit fighters also work the shadows of New Orleans, and I've found the fights a good place to find business or arrange discreet meets with potential clients.

Away from the lakefront, toward the downtown area and the Mississippi, are the various bars, nightclubs and other hot spots of my city's famous nightlife. The center of it all is the *Vieux Carre*, the "Old Quarter," or French Quarter, as most folks know it. After sunset, the whole French Quarter turns into something like an open-air bar and nightclub. Carrying open liquor on the street is legal in New Orleans, so patrons and tourists wander with drinks in hand from one establishment to another in the French Quarter over the course of a night. Almost every bar or nightclub will provide beverages "to carry" in paper or plastic containers.

What with all the tourists and their much-needed cred, the French Quarter gets regular NOPS patrols. This isn't as much of a handicap to biz as it might seem, however, as long as you look like you're just minding your own business. People fool enough to raise a public ruckus, especially if it involves large firearms, will earn themselves some New Orleans hospitality at the local police station. Beyond that, though, the NOPS don't tend to bother you. It's sadly true that some of the NOPS have a problem with metas, particularly orks and trolls, and will be more likely to hassle a passing ork than a whole crowd of humans loaded for bear. But by and large, the NOPS aren't much to worry about if you're circumspect. After all, hassling you is work. Arresting you is even worse; they have to spend time doing datawork when they could be out collecting bribes or having a few drinks.

The greater danger comes if you wander beyond the French Quarter, even by a few short blocks. Squatters, street trash and worse lurk on the outskirts of the Quarter, looking for handouts or targets. If you've got something they want—say, a decent pair of shoes—they'll try to take it. And they're not scared of much, so even your guns won't necessarily impress them.

• One thing that will draw the NOPS's attention is some slag wearing a bunch of armor. The weather down here's just a bit too warm to wear it casually, so it follows that if you're carrying, you must be up to no good. And be careful wearing it out in the bayou—I've heard of more than one Joker who drowned 'cuz his armor sank him like a brick when he fell in.

• Smythe

• I once spent four days wandering through the French Quarter. I wouldn't trade that time for anything. I got lost, swindled, amazed, drunk, mystified and found again. From a sunny afternoon in Jackson Square to the roar of Bourbon Street at night, I fell in love with New Orleans. I had my fortune read by a voudoun priestess. I sipped beer from a can in a brown paper bag. New Orleans has secrets, but you can hear them if you listen closely. Listen to the street musicians, listen to the old woman in her voudoun parlor, listen to the music and the voice of the city. After visiting that town, I will never be the same.

• Bull

"The best ork decker you've ever met."

• I'll say.

• Tinner

• There's something about the astral in the French Quarter that draws out all kinds of mystic freaks and critters. I ran into some wacked-out cult doing a ritual summoning smack in the middle of the street one night. All the drunks around thought it was some kind of show, but the monster spirit they called forth was no joke. I bailed before they decided to pull any mass carnage routines.

• Astro

The Oldest Profession

Prostitution is legal in New Orleans, within certain regulations. Bordellos, "massage parlors" and "hospitality suites" operate throughout the French Quarter and elsewhere, catering to the tastes of their mostly corporate clientele. There are also "escort services" that provide companionship for a night on the town or a more intimate evening in the privacy of one's hotel suite or home. Naturally, many of the legal establishments make healthy side profits providing more exotic services than are legally allowed.

• And some get pretty damn exotic, let me tell you.

• Rasputin Magekin

• Please don't.

• DVixen

The Mafia controls most legal bordellos in New Orleans, but competition has raised its ugly head in the form of new *bunraku* brothels run by the yakuza. The Japanese syndicate has little influence in New Orleans so far, but Jiro Fujiwara, the ambitious young New Orleans oyabun, plans to use the bunraku to force his way into the city's profitable vice business. The bunraku houses are already cutting into Mafia profits deeply enough for Dona Kozlowski to take notice. The yaks still don't have much of a base in the city; they're playing it fluid and subtle, so it's been hard for the Mafiosi to root them out. The only playhouse the yaks have

established so far got burned out a month or two back. Playing it so low-key means that the yaks are forced to ship in all of their "entertainers" (the current euphemism) from the Far East, Aztlan, the Carib League and various areas of the CAS; no locals are willing or desperate enough to work for them yet—at least, not with the Mafia watching. The Mafia is also starting to cause trouble at the bunraku brothels themselves, roughing up customers and the like, but the yaks have responded by increasing their "take-out" services. They're also hiring on good deckers to ensure that the mob doesn't mess with their phone lines.

Of course, most of the suits don't care who's providing the goods. Those with cred to burn can buy their own personalized companions, altered to meet their specifications and delivered for half a million nuyen or so. With the modern wonders of a persona-fix BTL shunt and some plastic surgery, nobody is off-limits to those with high cred ratings anymore.

◗ Watch out, boys and girls. Akimura's being coy about it, but he just told us that La Belle Dame's on the warpath. I wouldn't want to be in Fujiwara's shoes right now.
◗ Flanders Moll

◗ The bordellos can be a useful source of information if you play your cards right. It's amazing how much a security-conscious corpsuit will say during pillow talk, not to mention the kind of leverage just a few seconds of high-quality video (or even audio) from one of their "visits" can provide
◗ Fagan 2.0

◗ Marta Duval, madame of La Lune et les Etoiles, is an amazing woman. She's a Creole with the best features of her mixed heritage, and still a legendary beauty despite being almost sixty. She captured a lot of hearts in her youth and is probably one of the best-connected people in New Orleans. If Madame Marta doesn't know it, it's probably not worth knowing. Mind your manners with her (and her boys and girls)—she has a lot of friends.
◗ Cody

Smuggling the Rough Stuff

Naturally, there's a huge market for all sorts of other vices in this town: BTLs, drugs, black-market cyber, sex slaves and such. Even though more vices are legal here than anywhere else in the CAS, there are always those who want forbidden fruit, followed closely by people only too happy to supply them. Black market goodies pour into the city daily, some staying and some going upriver or overland to the UCAS or the rest of the CAS, and sometimes to the NAN as well.

The nastiest vice racket going on in New Orleans (apart from organlegging, which I'll get to in a bit) is the slave trade. Business is booming in young and healthy bodies for a variety of twisted purposes. Brothels and "private clubs" looking for fresh young talent—especially talent that can be surgically and mentally modified to suit the specialized tastes of some customers—are just the tip of the proverbial iceberg. I don't get involved with drek like this, but plenty of other people out there will do anything if the nuyen is right.

◗ A fixer with a conscience. Spare me.
◗ Prime Runner

◗ Look—I may be a criminal, but I'm not complete scum. Some of us have limits on what we'll do for cred, so what's wrong with that? You run your way, I'll run mine.
◗ Black-Eyed Susan

◗ Don't forget that some runners have backgrounds in this "trade," and some of them are pretty sensitive about it. If you go slinging lingo like "meat puppets" with a leering grin in a runner bar, you're likely to get flattened or worse.
◗ Mongoose

◗ The yaks offer top cred for smuggled bodies to supply their bunraku. Their resources are still pretty minimal, and the oyabun in other cities haven't exactly been pushing Fujiwara to his feet. The Mafia doesn't want them getting any bigger, so they're squeezing and blocking the yaks any way they can, which means the yaks are more desperate, so they pay more—more cred for me and you to bring them what they need. The flip side is that you'll be facing off with the mob, so you'll be earning every single nuyen.
◗ Double Dare

The slave trade also supplies the blood-sports arenas, though at least the pit fighters have a chance to win some kind of freedom—provided they don't get chewed up by a critter, a killer drone or another pit fighter first. Some better-known fighters end up working as street muscle once they've built names for themselves.

◗ That's for sure. Check out El Tigre Blanco or the Blonde Widow. They've both got killer reps in the ring and on the streets. They do muscle work for different Johnsons, including the mob. I hear they fight mostly for show these days, and their fights are rigged to keep them popular. Should be interesting to watch when the crowds get tired of them and want to see them go down.
◗ WarChylde

◗ An ork named LeCroix is a major fixer in the blood-sport biz. He's hard to miss: big, dark-skinned and always wears a white suit with a red rose in the buttonhole. Usually hangs out in the Arena, an out-of-the-way place near the lakefront where he fronts some of his fighters. He's always looking for new talent, and often has shadow-biz going on the side
◗ Go-B

Finally, slavers supply bodies for other needs—blood magic practiced by voudoun Red Sects, organlegging, and the appetites of the ghouls, vampires and other dwellers in the city's darker corners. For them, the underground "meat market" is exactly that: a place to shop for dinner.

◗ Still willing to go slaving if the money's right, Primey boy?
◗ Black-Eyed Susan

● The slave traders are in tight with the organleggers. The Mafia runs a huge piece of the slaver racket, but the body parts biz is run mostly by the Zobop. They're some folks you don't want to mess with, and that's all I'll say. The Zobop's been farming out some of the body work to the Tamanous organlegger ring, which runs a thriving operation in the city. What with weird voudoun sects and the high-magic environment in New Orleans, organlegging's taken some real sick twists. Don't ask me to describe 'em; you don't want the details. But street buzz says Dona Kozlowski don't like this stuff. In fact, she don't like it enough to make an issue of it—which says a lot, considering that this slitch don't bat an eye at putting twelve-year-olds to work in "gentlemen's clubs." Watch for stuff to get hot between the Mafia and the Zobop one of these days.
● Cimmaron

● If the dona takes any action against the Zobop, it won't be because her morals are offended. The Zobop's been making bundles of cred in the parts biz, and our girl Miriam wants that action. Mommy Paula found it distasteful and concentrated on making a profit elsewhere. Miriam continued that policy, but then the organ market took off. So now she's just going to correct a flawed business decision.
● Harriet the Spy

The Zobop: Magical Vice

The *Zobop* is New Orleans' homegrown version of the Mafia, based around voudoun traditions and practices. They've been a power in New Orleans for centuries and are deeply entrenched in certain vice markets, especially drug dealing and magical vice trades. Techno-based vices like BTL and simsense aren't their speed; they've left those to the Mafia, allowing the Families to outstrip them in profit. However, the voudoun gangsters have a powerful mystique and a fearsome reputation that keep most local people—including the Mafiosi—afraid of them.

When the Awakening brought new reality to the power of voudoun, the Zobop moved big-time into magical criminal rackets that the Mafia still refuses to touch. Even in New Orleans, the mob doesn't trust magic, and most of Kozlowski's boys want nothing to do with voudoun or anything that smacks of it. This left the whole, unsavory field of magical vice wide open for the Zobop to play in. They run plenty of rackets in the city involving pleasure spells and secret rites for select guest lists with jaded tastes. If you believe the rumors, the Zobop even set up private sessions in which they summon spirits to possess people. This allegedly provides real thrills for the client, the spirit and sometimes even the "victim," depending on how the game goes. The Zobop also run most drug-smuggling operations in the metroplex, offering old chemical favorites to liven up private parties.

Quite a few Zobop operations are run out of spooky squats in some of the more squalid areas of the plex. Many of these are rumored to have altars and shrines, or even to be inhabited by malevolent spirits.

● Last year, I brought some goods from the Carib League to New Orleans for the Zobop. The op was run by a creepy Zobop slag who called himself Old Bones. Decked himself out like one of those voudoun guys with the top hat and tails, and wore dark sunglasses even at night. He looked about a hundred and two years old and had a laugh that sent chills up my spine. He paid real well, and I'd sure as hell never cross him. Buddy of mine named Iron Pete made that mistake; decided to keep an extra cut of the goods for himself. Pete and his rig disappeared not long afterward, but I swear I saw him a couple months later, still working for Old Bones. The old fragger cacked Pete and turned him into a zombie!
● Swamp Rat

● Old Bones knows zombies, bonhomme. He is one himself, a grande zombie, with free will and considerable influence in the Zobop.
● Tommy Dre

● Buildrek. Zombies are mindless, magical puppets strung about by voudoun practitioners. Some houngan has pulled the chrome over your eyes.
● Skeptic

● Don't be so quick to disparage, my skeptical friend. While most zombies are merely pawns, some have survived their creator's death and stayed to play games with the mortals.
● ConjureMan

● The Zobop are sometimes willing to provide magical services most useful to runners—mind control, interrogation, even implanting false memories. With enough cred, you could probably even get some ritual sorcery done (they have some tricky way of forming an astral link). All for a very steep fee, of course.
● Mongoose

● It's a shame the Zobop are technophobic. I bet they could rake in quite a bit of cred if they burned some BTL simchips of those kinky possession sessions.
● Huck

ORGANLEGGING

Illegal organs and transplants are hot commodities in New Orleans, and this is one of the few rackets the Mafia doesn't control. The Family stayed out of organlegging, considering it beneath them to get involved in chopping up corpses (or worse). Some would say that choice was their mistake. Other outfits, less squeamish or more desperate, picked up the market and ran with it. Now that there's a lot of nuyen to be made in illegal body parts, the Mafia wants a cut of the action.

Because the demand for black-market organs in the city is relatively low, much of the high-quality "merchandise" gets shipped elsewhere in the CAS or UCAS, especially to Atlanta and points upriver along the Mississippi, like Minneapolis-St. Paul. Running organs is a specialized biz, so they tend to be a "filler" product used to keep rigs from running half-empty.

● Akimura has it half right. The demand for organs in New Orleans is pretty low. The demand for bodies, on the other hand, is through the roof. Why? Two words: voudoun and ghouls. The Red Sects and some of the other voudoun groups use deaders to make zombies, and they don't need all the messy internal parts—or even all the external parts. They just need a relatively intact body with a head and all (or most) of its limbs in the right places. So organleggers take out the giblets and other bits like the eyes and sell them off piecemeal, while the muscle and bone tissue (the least valuable parts on the organ market) get sold to the Red Sects for zombie-making or fed to the ghouls. In return, the organleggers get magical drek from the voudoun sects and protection from the ghouls. A nice little arrangement.
● Blackstone

● How can a zombie see without eyes?
● Data-Monger

● Even zombies with eyes don't use them to see, bonhomme. The meat is dead and rotting. The zombie is animated by a spirit that inhabits its dead flesh, summoned by the houngan who made it. The spirit sees like all spirits do, on the astral. It doesn't rely on physical sight. So the old story about zombies seeing only "the light of the living" is true in a way.
● Tommy Dre

● Tommy, my boy, you couldn't be more wrong. I don't know where you get your information, but a zombie is just animated flesh. That's it. End of sentence. Period. Whether or not it has eyes just doesn't matter, because it doesn't need to see to follow the orders the houngan gives it. I don't know what you're talking about, but what you're implying just isn't true.
● ConjureMan

ARMS SMUGGLING

Another profitable form of contraband, especially these days, is weapons and related supplies going from New Orleans to the Caribbean League or across the Gulf of Mexico to the Yucatan rebels in Aztlan. Naturally, the Azzie government and the corp that runs it have tried to curtail the shipments, but so far with little success. The tighter they squeeze, the more profitable the supply runs, at least as long as support for the rebels holds out. And where there's cred to be made, people find ways to make it no matter what the obstacles.

The near-total lack of a central government in the Caribbean League keeps the weapons trade there brisk, to say the least. Criminal syndicates, terrorists, pirate kings, would-be pirate kings and others all want the latest bang-bangs for their private armies, and plenty of people are willing to supply them. Some of the arms trade goes through Miami, but the CAS/League border in Florida is too short and too heavily patrolled for smugglers to breach easily. Using New Orleans as the gateway simplifies the smuggler's life quite a bit.

Some of the armaments smuggled out of New Orleans end up in South America, particularly Colombia, the last stronghold of the ghost cartels and the *narcotrafficantes*—the few, the proud, those people still dealing in drugs rather than BTLs. These fine folks need lots of weapons to shore up their control over the so-called government down there and to stave off threatened invasions by Aztlan and Amazonia (or both), so they're willing to pay decent prices. As neither Aztlan nor Amazonia wants anyone arming the cartels, they patrol their respective borders vigorously. Fortunately, they end up fighting each other more often than not, allowing smugglers who know what they're doing to slip past.

Another prime location for arms dealing is Peru. The communist group Sendero Luminoso (the "Shining Path") and the rebel Tupac Amarus are still trying to take over the country. They would have succeeded by now if the Japanese Imperial Marines hadn't stepped in to keep the government from collapsing. As it is, the Imperials can control Lima and a few smaller cities, but the rebels control the rest of the country (when they're not fighting each other), and their Incan magic gives them an edge in addition to what they get from the terrain. Rumors are that Amazonia is supporting the Tupacs and Aztlan's hovering nearby, but Sendero's also been drawing in just about all the communists left in the world to flesh out their ranks. This low-intensity warfare looks like it will be continuing for some time, and that's good for biz.

Arms smuggling is serious business on both sides of the equation. Customers looking for weapons shipments tend to be some of the toughest fraggers around, and governments and corporations deal harshly with any arms dealers they manage to catch.

◗ Unless, of course, those arms dealers happen to be working in the government's or corp's interest. And I'm not just talking about people they hire on the sly, either. The CAS, for example, has no problem with arms going to the Yucatan rebels, so CAS patrols are more than willing to look the other way when it comes to shipments through the Gulf. But the CAS is a little twitchy about certain groups in the Carib League getting more weapons, especially if they end up using them in Florida, so the authorities tend to clamp down harder on arms moved through New Orleans toward Miami. And bringing illegal weapons into New Orleans with the intent of selling them in the CAS or UCAS is a definite no-no. By the same token, Ares doesn't seem to mind having the occasional shipment of Ares Arms gear hijacked and shipped down to the Yucatan with the numbers filed off, but woe betide the smugglers who ship Ares goodies anyplace Damien Knight doesn't want them to go.
◗ Nowhere Girl

◗ Aztechnology's fed up with the arms smuggling from New Orleans to the Yucatan and South America, and they want to cut off the weapons at the source. I've heard that some AZT undercover agents are working in New Orleans with the full backing of the corp in order to stanch the flow of arms to the Yucatan by any means necessary. There's a rumor that some of the agents are those freaky Azzie blood mages. So if you're planning to get into the arms-dealing business down New Orleans way, watch out. Aztechnology may be right around the corner.
◗ White Rabbit
"Oh my ears and whiskers!"

◗ Rumor also has it that Jetblack is working at my neighborhood Stuffer Shack. I'll run those guns and take my chances against mythical Azzie blood mages.
◗ Gumbo

TALISLEGGING

New Orleans is a magical city like almost nowhere else, so there's a brisk business smuggling talismans and other magical materials in and out. Graveyard dust, hundred-year-old human skulls, willow wood from a thief's grave and other magical goods go out through the smuggling pipeline, while trinkets and supplies from the Carib League and Aztlan make their way into the city and the surrounding region. Some voudoun talismans from Haiti will fetch a good price on the black market; local voudoun practitioners regard such materials highly and are willing to pay well. The largest chunk of the market, however, is outward-bound from New Orleans. Because so many magical supplies are homegrown rather than imported, there's not a lot of demand for entire shipments of common magical goods. Magical materials brought into New Orleans tend to be filler carried by smugglers hauling more profitable cargoes.

◗ A city with so much mojo goin' on don't need magic stuff? This guy ain't makin' sense.
◗ Riptide

◗ He didn't say that, Rip. He said they don't need much of the ordinary stuff. In New Orleans, most magical supplies are perfectly legal and available in a dozen different lore stores, so there's no need to smuggle in big shipments of fetishes and other drek. It's the illegal and tightly regulated stuff that lets you turn a profit. You can buy materials for a ritual healing spell from any licensed dealer, but not for a ritual pain spell. Getting that drek requires a license and a long datatrail tying it to you. So it pays to buy that kind of thing from the local dealer in black-market talismans. Get the difference?
◗ Zydeco

The black market in talismans is largely controlled by the Zobop and a few of the krewes, voudoun posses, and secret magical groups in the city. This gives them the double benefit of a little profit on the side and easy access to all the supplies they need to work their own mojo. All of these groups are turbo-nasty aggressive and have come up with imaginative ways to punish those who cross them. I don't recommend talislegging operations as a means to ensure long life. If you choose to get involved in this market, keep it short, sweet and rare.

◗ Hey, Cap, I thought this was an intro for out-of-towners. Seems more like this slag's trying to convince us all to stay home. "Don't do this; it's too dangerous. Don't do that; it's too dangerous." Frag, that's half the reason I'm in this biz—for the thrill of it.
◗ Wolfy

◗ Then you should stay home, bonhomme. New Orleans will eat you alive. I prefer working with people who know what they're doing—and that includes not taking stupid risks for the fun of it. Those who do well for themselves here keep the city's dangers in mind. Those who don't end up as ghoul food.
◗ Akimura

The Krewes

The krewes are the other players in the New Orleans magical black market, many of them in talislegging, but some in vice and body supply as well. A homegrown variation on the Seoulpa Rings (to use an analogy most of you will likely understand), these small criminal gangs pattern themselves after the traditional krewes of Mardi Gras. They tend to take names that reflect their territory or particular area of interest, like the Krewe of Pan, which specializes in magical vice rackets and has ties to the Zobop. Strictly small-time in terms of the city's overall criminal hierarchy, the krewes are more like large and powerful gangs than criminal syndicates. However, no prudent smuggler or runner should underestimate their growing influence and knowledge of their territory. They turn up just about everywhere in the New Orleans underworld, and many of them have strong links to the Mafia, the Zobop or even the Red Sects.

● There are definite connections between the krewes and the Zobop. Some of the voudoun posses in New Orleans take their marching orders from the Zobop, and there are persistent rumors of some Red Sects having ties to the syndicate as well. The underground trade in illegal magic seems to support this conclusion.
● Connor Black

● "Voudoun posses"? "Red Sects"? Can someone enlighten us, please?
● Curious George

● Voudoun posses are krewes led by a voudoun houngan. They're more likely to have magically active members, but other than that aren't much different. Red Sects are the nasty kind of voudoun practitioners—think black magic, and plenty of it.
● Delta Queen

Some krewes have edged into the vice trade, but most of them end up buying from the Mafia rather than from independent smugglers (who don't last long anyway, since they're trying to cut in on Mafia turf). The mob lets the krewes handle street-level chip dealing and pimping, while they rake in the big profits on the supply and management side.

● The krewes are just as vicious as the Seoulpa Rings, maybe more so. They fight among themselves over territory and different rackets sometimes, but most of the time their interests don't overlap much, so they can focus on taking profits away from the Mafia machine. Needless to say, the Mafia squashes any krewe that cuts too deep, but the mob is like a beast getting stuck with a thousand pinpricks. Sooner or later, it's going to start bleeding to death.
● WolfJack

● Not if Kozlowski is smart (and she is). The best way for the Mafia to handle the upstart krewes is by bringing them into the Family. The Mafia gets their services and resources while providing an incentive for the other krewes to compete for Mafia favor rather than risk hacking off the Family. I've heard stories on the streets already about the Goblin Krewe by the lakeshore working with the Mafia
● Candy Spice

● There's one krewe, which I'll leave nameless, that specializes in breaking and entering and art heists. New Orleans seems to draw kooky rich people with exotic and extreme tastes, and quite a few of these have amassed some very interesting and valuable "private collections." Whether it's art, magic or weirder stuff, this krewe would love to break in and steal it. They've got a streak of mischief, too, so if the job results in some "poetic justice," they're more likely to take it
● Bondi

Zombie Smuggling

No, I'm not joking. Zombie smuggling is the latest wrinkle in the talislegging market, and it's a growing business by all accounts. Local voudoun sects create the zombies, and various others—krewes, the Zobop, even some independent smugglers with a taste for the bizarre—ship them to various customers outside the New Orleans metroplex for a cut of the fat price. I suppose it shouldn't surprise me. Zombies are the perfect minions, after all: almost mindless, obedient, immune to pain and never needing sleep, food or air to keep working. They never ask for raises or strike for better working conditions, either. While they're of no use in any kind of public role, plenty of syndicates and shadow operations have found other uses for zombies, and the Red Sects are turning a tidy profit selling the critters. The Mafia, which has no stake in the market, doesn't like it one bit. There's the money issue, for one thing; anything that enriches the Zobop or other criminal players brings them that much closer to threatening Mafia hegemony. The involvement of the Red Sects, though—and the possibility of her own people having to face these things the next time the mob tangles with its underworld competitors—has lit a fire under Dona Kozlowski. Despite her rumored aversion to getting mixed up with magical drek, word is that Dona Kozlowski has spoken with Don Batista of the Carib League about gaining some mojo of her own to balance things out.

● That'll come in real handy if La Belle Dame decides she really does want in on the organlegging trade.
● ConjureMan

● That's for sure. There's a war brewing between the Zobop and the mob in the near future, like the one down in the Carib League between the Batistas and the local houngans. Don Batista won that one by getting some of the voudoun sects on his side, but that's not going to happen in New Orleans. The Zobop won't go down easy, and the Mafia'll need a lot of magical muscle to take them on. La Belle Dame is already quietly recruiting spell-slingers in the shadows.
● Grande Flamme
"Great balls of fire!"

● Not a job I'd recommend, mes amis. The Zobop know their stuff and they have some scary mojo. Don't mess with them unless you've got all your affairs in order.
● Ryu Duval

● Here's another market with a funny twist. Back in the 1930s, somebody got the bright idea of introducing nutria into south Louisiana to control pests. For those of you not from around here, nutria are possum-sized rodents native to Argentina, with orange teeth and a vicious nature. Within a few years, the little fraggers started breeding like crazy because they had no natural enemies in the bayou. The Awakening seems to have made nutria even more vicious and difficult to control. The city is trying to encourage people to hunt and kill the things, but various efforts at starting a craze for nutria meat or pelts have failed miserably. About the only thing people do hunt nutria for these days is for talisman work, using pelts and bones to make magical gear.
● Tommy Dre

◗ The other major smuggling business in New Orleans is information. Like the man said earlier, the Crescent City is a playground for hundreds of thousands of people every year, many of them big noises in business, politics or the underworld. So secrets are big biz in the metroplex, and runners subtle enough to ferret out those secrets can do well. Sometimes it involves Matrix work, but more often the Matrix just helps with the legwork that sets you up for the actual run. Getting information out of someone's head with no one the wiser takes skill and a fair amount of patience. Getting the information to the right people afterward can be even harder. There's an especially brisk trade in datasteals and courier runs carrying data too sensitive to be entrusted to the Matrix.

◗ Monsieur Matrix

"Vive la Network!"

SMOKE AND MIRRORS

◗ The following post comes from Doc Cane, a voudoun street runner who's lived and worked in New Orleans since forever. In this file the good doctor shares his knowledge of the Crescent City's magical side. Mundanes and spell-slingers alike, pay attention; the shadows of New Orleans hold magical surprises aplenty. (And some of them can be lethal.)

◗ Captain Chaos

Transmitted: 02-14-59 at 01:35:04 (EST)

Where y'at, bonhommes? Ol' Cap tapped me to tell y'all about mojo down New Orleans way. Let me tell you, there's plenty of it. The plex saw a massive voudoun revival following the Awakening, second only to Haiti and the Caribbean League. The streets of the French Quarter and the mist-shrouded bayous are soaked in magical power waiting to be tapped by people brave enough—or foolish enough—to try. There's magical groups all over everywhere, from voudoun sects to hermetic groups to shamans from local Amerind tribes and Cajun conjurers living out in bayou country. And there's also the things you don't want to run across on a dark night—the spirits and specters and vampires that prowl in search of amusements or victims.

THAT VOUDOUN YOU DO

First a little history lesson, my children, about where our voudoun comes from. The African slave trade began around 1510, and the slaves taken from their native land brought their beliefs and practices with them to the New World. Most went to the Caribbean islands to work the plantations, and there were Christianized by their masters. The slaves weren't allowed to practice their ancestral rites (unless they wanted to die for them), but they quickly recognized the basic similarities between their beliefs and those of the Catholic plantation farmers. The Catholics prayed to saints to intercede for them with a higher God, just as the Africans called on tribal spirits to do the same thing. On behalf of our people, and to satisfy the slavers, the African spirits took on the names and attributes of Catholic saints. The Catholic Church's elaborate ceremonies and costumes also appealed to our African ancestors, so they combined those elements with their own rituals, and the voudoun tradition was born. With its unique blend of French, Spanish and Indian cultures, New Orleans offered a perfect setting for our religion's practice and growth.

Voudoun recognizes a supreme God, one that our puny consciousness can't come close to understanding. Below this almighty and unknowable being, spirits—called loa—rule over the world's affairs. Unlike the high-and-mighty One God, the loa are beings that people can deal with. They have feelings, likes and dislikes, just like we do. In matters of family, love, happiness, health, work, the harvest or the hunt, voudoun worshipers make offerings to the loa to ensure success. If we please them, they reward us.

Each loa has its preferred fruit or vegetable, color, number, day of the week and so on, and they'll be angered if you forget. The loa also manifest through nature: wind and rain, lightning and thunder, the river, the ocean, certain animals, trees or stones. At certain times the loa will mount a worshiper without being called, for they have their own goals and such is their way. The spirits of our ancestors play their part as well; we revere them and ask for their guidance, and they watch over our family lines through the centuries. Folk in New Orleans have practiced voudoun for generations, both secretly and openly, passing down their knowledge over the years.

These days, about 20 percent of the population of New Orleans practices voudoun as a religion. Of these, only a fraction actually have the Talent, as one of your mages would call it—maybe 2 percent, about twice the average in the world. Voudoun attracts magical folk, though whether it's because we've always accepted magic as real or through the will of the loa, no one can say for sure. Practitioners with the Talent make up most of the priesthood, the houngans and mambos. The rest are what you would call mundane, but no less devout toward the loa, nor diminished in the loa's eyes.

◗ Voudoun as a religious practice is an interesting case study. There are probably more people in New Orleans (especially the outlying areas) who believe in voudoun than the official numbers indicate, especially as followers of voudoun often have no problem practicing another religion right alongside their voudoun rituals. For example, many are devout Christians who leave little offerings for Legba and Erzulie on simple household altars.

◗ Holly

◗ Skip the social studies, 'kay? Just tell me what voudoun in New Orleans means for me if I've gotta pull a job there.

◗ Prime Runner

◗ It means you take it seriously, no matter what. That 2 percent the Doc quoted may not seem like much, but mundane voudoun worshipers can be just as dangerous as voudoun spell-slingers if you get on their bad side. The loa sometimes possess mundane followers, which means that the lowlife punk from the voudoun posse or the krewe that you're tangling with can suddenly manifest scary powers, apparently out of nowhere. I've seen it in action. A voudoun ganger possessed by the loa of war nearly took my head off before I took him down.

◗ Impact

Voudoun sects exist throughout New Orleans and southern Louisiana. Most members are simple, honest folk who harm no one; their houngans and mambos are no more threatening than a parish priest, unless you give them reason to call down the anger of the loa upon you. Many run lore stores in the city, selling genuine magical wares along with trinkets, hoodoo charms and mojo bags intended to bring gullible tourists true love or an instant fortune.

• The voudounistas have cornered the talisman market in New Orleans. They've got all the best stuff in their little shops, in places like the French Quarter and the outskirts of downtown. You've got to sort through reams of junk intended for mundanes, but the good stuff is there. If the local voudoun community likes you, you can even get some pretty good deals.
• Westmoreland

• I know a few who ply their trade on the streets too, some to "bring the loa to the people" and others to cause some trouble for The Man. Quite a few tourists have been shocked to discover the request they made to what they thought was a street performer or con artist was actually carried out. I once saw a Japanese powersuit exec faint when her question to a fortuneteller was answered by a summoned ancestor spirit.
• Walker

• Some talismongers in New Orleans also follow other traditions; the Crescent Moon store in the French Quarter has excellent hermetic books and supplies, for example. Voudoun does tend to color the magical supplies available in the city, however. If you're a mage, you might want to make sure you know a few people to talk to before doing business here, just to be sure you can get what you want when you want it. There's nothing worse than needing gear for a ritual and being left high and dry by local talismongers—or, worse, soaked by high prices.
• Blackstone

Other voudoun sects actively pursue magical knowledge. These magical groups often consist of many worshipers, among whom is a small "inner circle" of magical practitioners working to refine their Art. These sects are secretive, enforcing oaths among their members to keep the group's secrets on pain of expulsion or worse. We have learned from history not to be too open, as we are then vulnerable to those who would oppress us. The *Tour Rouge* ("Red Tower"), the *Gens des Etoiles* ("People of the Stars"), the *Bizangoes* and the Midnight Dancers are all representative of the local magical sects.

• They're like any other magical group: secretive and clannish. They protect their lore from outsiders and have been known to fight magical "wars" with other groups, in the city and elsewhere. Some of them do some good in the areas where they live and work; others don't give a frag about anything except gathering more and more magical knowledge. The Midnight Dancers, for example, make a packet putting on "genuine voudoun rituals and native dances" for tourists while working real magic in the dead of night at hidden places in the bayous. The Red Tower is more of a private club, and it goes about its business completely concealed from public view.
• Maya

• No surprise, considering that *Le Tour Rouge* is a Red Sect. Practitioners of *Petro* voudoun don't much care for the light of day.
• Rasputin Magekin

• We follow the true path to power. The rest of you play at voudoun. You are contemptible.
• Maman Sangre

• Ooooh! Ooooh! The boogieman!
• D. Bunker

Because voudoun began as the magic of the oppressed, it touches the outcasts of New Orleans, especially the poorer metahumans pushed to the outskirts of the metroplex. The tradition is strongest among orks and trolls who live along the lakeshore and in the bayous, and also among the krewes that call themselves voudoun posses. These independent gangs, led by a mambo or a houngan, use their magical powers to prosper at their rivals' expense.

• Some of the voudoun krewes in New Orleans are pure poison, literally. They're toxics, practicing blood magic, ritual sacrifice and some of the nastiest drek you can imagine.
• Impact

• Alarmist claptrap. Voudoun got a bad rap from all the Hollywood jetwash about it. It's no more dangerous than any Native American shamanistic tradition, some of which can also get pretty visceral at times.
• Social Adept

• Granted. But there are dark sides to every tradition, and voudoun is no exception. Most voudounistas are no more "toxic" than any other shaman out there, but the twisted rites of some Red Sects are just as nasty as Impact says. They stain the purity of the path.
• Mama D

Red Sects

Some voudoun practitioners, sadly enough, have chosen to turn their magic toward evil. These Red Sects, so named for their often bloody rites, practice Petro voudoun and human sacrifice to raise power and feed the angry spirits who they claim are crying out for vengeance for generations of slavery and abuse. Many Red Sect worshipers are metahumans who want power to strike back at the people keeping them down. I have known their rage myself, but the path of Petro is dangerous. The fire of revenge burns everyone sooner or later. Still, a Red Sect can do great harm before it self-destructs, and for many who join them, that is enough.

◗ Oh, boy. Now we've got evil orks destroying the innocent in a misguided effort to strike back at alleged oppressors. How dare this slot even suggest that metahumans are somehow naturally drawn to this kind of drek?
◗ Proud Trog

◗ It's a fact that more metas than humans practice Petro, chum. More metas practice voudoun in general. And it's also true that some of them do it because they've got a grievance against the mostly human folks who push their kind around. That's all Doc said, as I read it. And before you go accusing him of racist slurs, Doc's an ork who's suffered quite a bit at the hands of bigots. When he says he's known their rage, he means it literally.
◗ Mama D

DWELLERS IN THE SHADOWS

The magic of New Orleans goes well beyond the practices of metahumanity. Spirits abound in city and bayou, many of them free spirits drawn to the jambalaya of people in the metroplex. Ghouls and ghosts haunt the city's graveyards; vampires live throughout the region, along with such magical beasts as loup-garou, devil jack diamonds, hellbenders and corpselights.

The loa are strong in the city, and their presence can be felt wherever voudoun is practiced. The spirits of our ancestors watch over us and can be summoned by those who know how. Nature spirits dwell in the rivers, lakes and bayous as well as in the city streets. The city spirits grow particularly powerful when there's something going on that gets them all worked up, like the revels of Mardi Gras. The crush of people, the excitement, the swirling emotions of the metahuman throngs ... the spirits respond to these things, drawing strength and substance from them.

◗ Substance?! Did this man just imply that the spirits actually feed on our emotions?
◗ Curious George

◗ Calm down, George. It's not like a vampire sucking your blood dry. Haven't you ever gotten a buzz from a crowd, like at a rock concert?
◗ Delta Queen

◗ How do you know it's not the same? How much do we really know about what spirits can do?
◗ Curious George

◗ I summoned a city spirit in New Orleans once during Mardi Gras. It appeared out of the crowd as this weird guy wearing a mask, a bizarre costume and strings of beads in all colors. I had a hard time understanding it—it sounded almost as chaotic as the party in the streets. But once I persuaded it to help me ... WHOOSH! Did it have mojo to burn. If you've got the Talent, give Mardi Gras a try sometime. Until then, you haven't lived.
◗ Spirit-Dancer

◗ Mardi Gras in general is an interesting time to work magic in New Orleans ... in the Chinese-curse sense. Mardi Gras generates a lot of emotional energy that builds up on the astral, creating a fierce background count. If you know what you're doing, you can channel that energy and pull off some pretty amazing drek, but if you don't, it can turn around and bite you. Be careful what kind of mojo you call up and where you try to do it. If you're running counter to the spirit of the festival around you, you could be in for trouble.
◗ Taylor

◗ All that background count comes in handy for hiding all sorts of magical operations. Plenty of spell-slingers take advantage of it to cover secret rituals and drek.
◗ Wiz Kid

Powerful free spirits live among us as well, or lurk outside the city. Some of them take human form and walk the streets of the Lakefront District or the French Quarter looking for companionship or prey. Most of these are tricksters or players interested in metahuman affairs; they amuse themselves and then disappear. Others are evil spirits who delight in causing pain. They prey on the innocent and play on the darkest desires of anyone unfortunate enough to cross their path. I have met some of these spirits, and I know their power. Beware them.

◗ A free city spirit lives in the French Quarter, calls itself Toussaint. Somebody whistled it up during Mardi Gras some years back, and it stayed around because it found metahumanity fascinating. Toussaint wanders the French Quarter in various metahuman forms, male and female. It likes to party with the people, and it sometimes tries to help out folks in need. Toussaint can create gold and silver doubloons and other old-style money out of thin air. I saw it in the guise of a gorgeous Creole woman who produced a handful of coins out of nowhere to pay the tab for a particularly wild party at Jean Lafitte's one night.
◗ Rasputin Magekin

◗ Another free spirit turns up in the French Quarter from time to time called Mal. Toussaint says Mal is its "brother," but it never explains exactly what that means. Like Toussaint, Mal can take on just about any human or metahuman form it wants, but Mal delights in making trouble for people, and some of its ideas of humor can get pretty nasty. Mal sometimes gives out money and gifts like Toussaint does, except that Mal's always turn out to be fake or even cursed. Mal has also been known to join pit fights as an elven woman named Malice.
◗ Tommy Dre

◗ That ain't no spirit. That's my ex. Don't nobody date her if you want to live long.
◗ Gator Boy

The living and the dead are close together in New Orleans, and the spirits of the dead rise up from the cemeteries and walk

the streets at night. Most of these ghosts are harmless, visible only to those with the Talent. They pass from place to place, acting out events from their lives over and over. Few such phantoms will trouble you if you don't trouble them. You might even distract one from its endless pantomime long enough to ask it a question or two—but don't insist. Too persistent an interruption risks making them angry, and an angry ghost will turn on you.

A few restless spirits of the dead intrude on the land of the living. These spirits left some important thing undone that shackles them to this world, or else simply hate all living things. Called specters, they can use the power of their passion or rage to affect the material world. Some are poltergeists, throwing objects around or causing noises and strange lights to appear in the dead of night. Other specters, more powerful and malevolent, attack living creatures and sometimes possess the bodies of the living in order to carry out some task or to feel the breath of life again. Specters are difficult to banish unless you find out what ties them to this world. Only when those ties are cut will the specter go on its way from this world to the next.

◗ Plenty of ghosts and specters are tied to some particular place or object that seems to anchor them on this plane. As long as their anchor remains intact, they're damned near impossible to banish. You've got to destroy the anchor first, or cleanse it of the ghost's psychic impressions. I know some adepts and spell-slingers who specialize in this kind of "ghost busting," getting rid of ornery spirits.
◗ Golddigger

◗ Ghosts are an occupational hazard of shadowrunning down New Orleans way. The mage whose body you just geeked may well come at you an hour or two later in astral form, looking for revenge. And sometimes you get caught in the crossfire, so to speak. I know some runners who went up against a krewe captain out to avenge his brother's death by taking out a rival krewe leader. They greased the slot, but not even death could snuff out his desire for revenge. The other krewe leader turned up dead not long afterward, and the runners were the top suspects. The krewe turned around and geeked the runners, but some people think that the krewe captain's ghost just finished the job he started.
◗ Yoshi

◗ What a load of drek. I know the dustup you're talking about, and it wasn't no fraggin' spook who did the guy. Those runners got greedy and stupid and they paid for it. Evolution in action, plain and simple.
◗ D-Con

◗ Don't think the krewe agrees with you, D-Con. Buzz out on the streets says they're looking to hire runners with better-than-average magical muscle for a hush-hush job. Their rep as employers is in the drekker right now, but it sounds to me like there's some ghost-hunting work out there.
◗ Walker

The Walking Dead

The walking dead are truly fearsome: zombies, ghouls, vampires and their kind. These creatures often haunt the older cemeteries and the city's other dark and secret places. In this city, bodies are not buried, because we are below sea level. Corpses are instead interred in mausoleums ... where they rarely stay for long. Some of the dead also live in the depths of the surrounding bayous and forests. These dark creatures serve Baron Samedi and his ilk. All of them feed on the living to survive; they hunt us as hawks hunt rabbits. Should you run across one, stay out of its way.

◗ Back 'round the turn of the century, when I was a kid, they used to tell you to keep clear of St. Louis Cemetery No. 1 unless you went with a tour group, because muggers'd roll you for your valuables. Nowadays, they tell you to keep clear of the vampire or the ghouls who'll rip your heart out. I miss the good old days ... .
◗ Saint Expedie

◗ What superstitious nonsense. Zombies are just corpses animated through magic, no more alive than a table made to walk through the power of a spell or a statue inhabited by a familiar spirit. They're puppets of the magician who created them. As for vampires and other so-called undead, they're the victims of Old-World mythology applied to the Sixth World. Vampires, ghouls and others are metahumans infected with strains of the Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus (HMHVV). The retrovirus alters the genes of its hosts, giving them various magical abilities and the need to feed on the energy of other living beings through flesh or blood to sustain their altered biochemistry. They're no more dead than anyone else; they're victims of a disease whose cause and cure have yet to be found.
◗ Magister

◗ Not entirely accurate on the zombies, friend. Some zombies are puppets animated through manipulation spells and drek like that, but others—made by methods from the voudoun of the islands or New Orleans—are different. Some of them are "alive" courtesy of spirits summoned by the houngan, and who's to say those spirits aren't the ones that inhabited those bodies before they died? Not a pleasant thought.
◗ Decker del Sur

◗ Here's an even less pleasant one. Some of those spirits escape the houngan's control. Guess what you get then? That's right—a free spirit trapped in an animated corpse, with all the powers of a freebie and a need for living flesh to sustain it. You thought ghouls were bad? Try taking on one of these things
◗ Walker

◗ Urban legend. A "free zombie" is a contradiction in terms, and there is no such thing as "undead."
◗ Jaxom

◗ Not so, bonhomme. Didn't you read what I said about Old Bones, the Zobop boss? He's a grande zombie, with magical pow-

ers of his own to call upon and an appetite for human flesh. His people fear him, as well they should. So should the rest of us; he's a powerful man in New Orleans.
● Tommy Dre

● As I see it, the question really depends on your definition of "dead." Vampires and banshees can walk around, think, talk and do most things that you or I can, but they can't reproduce, and they can only survive by draining living essence from other beings. Without it, they waste away. Sounds mighty undead to me.
● Loki

● We feed on other life to survive, too. We eat other living things ,and we starve to death if we don't. Not much different from the so-called undead, is it?
● Gardener

● The worst part of the HMHVV crisis are the drekwits who want to become infected because they've become enamored with some romantic notion of vampires as gothic, tragic heroes. There are far too many "lost children" of this sort in the city, and unfortunately many of the infected are all too willing to take advantage of their naiveté. Sure enough, some of the vampires probably buy into the mythology, too. They have an infectious disease that grants them Awakened powers, and all they want to do is act poncey, feel sorry for themselves and seduce "mortals." What losers.
● Lucian

● You can always geek 'em and smuggle their bodies to someplace where you can collect a bounty.
● Iron Cross

● Where do ghouls fit? I thought they were a metahuman race.
● Adam

● That's a good question looking for an answer. Originally, ghouls were believed to be a metahuman race like orks or trolls because they all goblinized around the same time. More recently, we've learned that ghouls can make otherwise normal metahumans become ghouls by infecting them with a strain of HMHVV. Some scientists think that the original ghouls might have been humans with a dormant HMHVV retrovirus in their DNA. When magic came back, the virus reactivated, and people with a strong enough concentration of it became ghouls with the ability to infect other people. But because the transformation looked a lot like goblinization, people figured ghouls were metas like orks and trolls.
● Doc

● Okay, Doc. Now take your idea to its logical conclusion. If ghouls are the result of a virus, couldn't orks and trolls be, too? In fact, isn't it possible that all metahumans are the result of a genetic virus, and that our governments have known that all along and kept the information from us?
● Buzz

● I'm not sure I should dignify such Humanis trash with an answer. But to stay rational about it, metahumans have displayed no retroviral characteristics and clearly do not have the ability to infect humans like vampires and ghouls do. Medical science has long since established that metahumanity is not a "disease," nor is it transmittable.

I'd say the high incidence of HMHVV infections in New Orleans may be a regional thing. We know mundane diseases tend to cluster in certain regions and under certain conditions, and the hot, swampy environment of the Mississippi River delta has been quite a breeding ground for disease in the past. In a similar fashion, the high astral background count associated with New Orleans may make the city and the surrounding area an ideal breeding ground for HMHVV and related viruses that seem to have a magical component. If anyone wants to help collect some hard data, drop me a line.
● Doc

Dangers of the Bayou

Other magical beings living in and around New Orleans aren't as smart as spirits and the walking dead, but they're still plenty dangerous. Out in the bayous, a chance encounter with a hellbender or a devil jack diamond can end a shadowrunning career fast, so it pays to be careful. Pick up a native guide and do some research on what you might run into. Talk to people; slip around

the Matrix awhile; read a few Shadowland posts on the subject of critters native to these parts and how to avoid them. The information is there; as my friend the Captain would say, it's up to you to use it. You go into the bayou ignorant, you deserve whatever you get.

For those of you with the Talent, the dark depths of the swamps and woodlands are not good places to go wandering in astral form. Some have wandered off into the bayous and never returned, and an empty body is an open invitation for any spirit nearby to move in and set up housekeeping. Don't count on taking a "quick look-see," either. That's next to impossible. The bayous are full of hanging vines and thick curtains of Spanish moss, as well as the thick, organic soup of the swamp. All that living matter makes astral journeying slow and tricky work. Add to that the hazards of malevolent free spirits, corpselights and various dual-natured beasts, and you can see why the bayous are not the place for extended astral travel.

● The Doc's got that one right. Try to confine your astral work to the city if you can. All you have to watch out for there are ghosts and spirits.
● Magister

● The real critters to watch out for in the swamps are the corpselights: weird, glowing lights about the size of a basketball, usually a sickly greenish-yellow color. You can see them flickering through the trees at night. They lead people astray, into the jaws of hungry critters or into quicksand or similar natural traps. Or they lead you in circles until you're hopelessly lost. Once they've got a victim good and scared, the corpselights move in and drain the poor slot's life force. It's a rush like nothing you can imagine, better than any feeling in the world. A corpselight did it to me once. If my mage chummer hadn't killed the thing, it would've geeked me for sure.

The scary part is, I can't forget how good it felt. If I ever encounter a corpselight again, I'm not sure whether I'd want to stop it from draining me dry.
● Tiger

● The lights kill off the occasional careless smuggler, too. Some of the bodies that turn up in the swamps are corpselight victims, found dead with silly smiles frozen on their faces. Spooky.
● Ryu Duval

The bayous are also home to shamans who seek to protect them from all intruders—including the city, which they see as a cancer that will swallow them if given the opportunity. These shamans sabotage construction projects, petrochemical plants and anything else that might expand the habitation of metahumanity into the domain of nature. Their actions unfortunately only feed the power of the genuinely toxic shamans, who thrive on the corruption of the land and the waters. These evil people often sabotage petrochemical installations specifically to taint the bayous with raw petroleum and refined chemicals, thereby increasing their own magical powers and twisting the nature spirits to obey them.

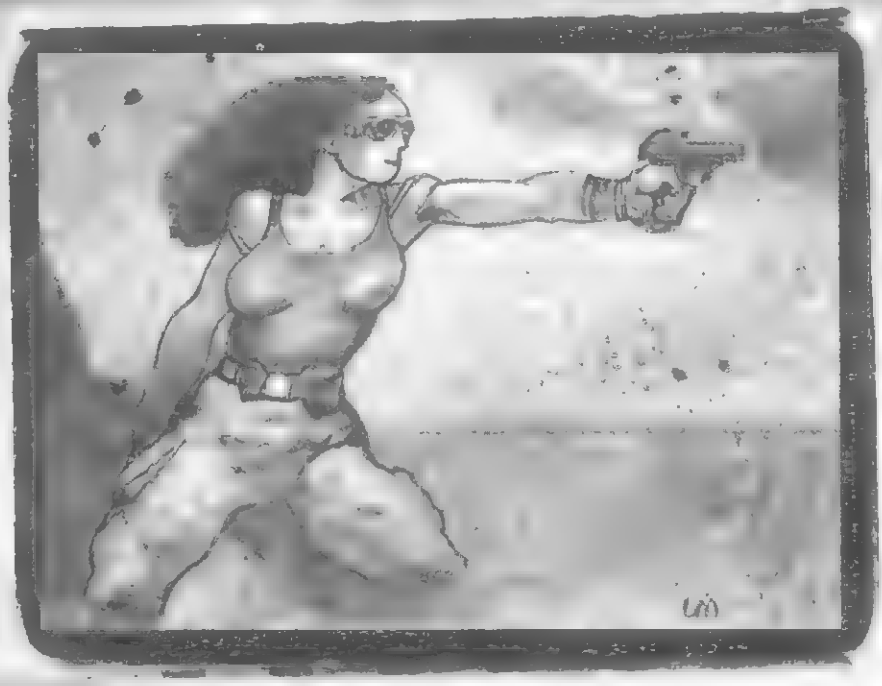
● Not every eco-shaman is a toxic; that's a picture the corps paint to keep public opinion from supporting us. We also do more than destroy instruments of industrial society. We use our magic to clean up the pollution such installations cause. We don't drek where we live, corp propaganda to the contrary.
● Delta Green

● Maybe that's true, but some of your folk have a definite agenda to "reclaim the industrial wastelands" into the wild. There've been dozens of sabotage attacks against the flood levees and other protections in the past few years, and more than one magically enhanced storm that threatened to flood the city.
● Sandbagger

● Toxics aren't very numerous in and around New Orleans—which is a good thing, considering how much other magical drek is going on there. There's a few, but nothing like you'll find in some really drekked-up regions of California or the United Kingdom. The local houngans and voudoun worshipers, along with Cajun conjure-men and shamans out in the wilderness, keep a pretty tight lid on toxic activity in their territory.
● Grande Flamme
"Great balls of fire!"

● Doc left out the bugs. I've seen insect spirits doing their thing in the swamplands near New Orleans. There's at least one nest of mosquito spirits breeding out in the bayous, backed by an elf mosquito shaman who calls himself Needle. They're behind some recent abductions and disappearances in New Orleans and the surrounding area; I'd guess they're after living bodies to infest with their spirit-grubs. I don't know how big the colony is, but it was big enough to send me and my team right out of there once we figured out what happened to the missing person we were tracking. Mr. Johnson doesn't have enough nuyen in his whole fraggin' corp to send me back into that hell. If anyone else comes across these fraggin' things, do whatever damage you can before getting out of there.
● Solo

VLADIVOSTOK: THE WILD EAST



● Ever since Yamatetsu announced its plans to relocate its corporate headquarters in Vladivostok, Russia, we've been getting requests for more information on that city. I put out some feelers and looked up some old friends on the Pacific Rim (*spaseeba* to those who posted for us). Boy, was I surprised at what I found.

In many ways, Vladivostok is a Russian version of Seattle: a political outpost on the Pacific Ocean, surrounded by foreign countries. Like Seattle for the UCAS, Vladivostok is a critical window onto the Pacific for the Russians, who provide a counterbalance to the Imperial Japanese Navy. Unlike Seattle, however, Vladivostok is not solely a political island, connected as it is to Mother Russia by a thin ribbon of land the Russians are fighting to keep from Awakened Siberia.

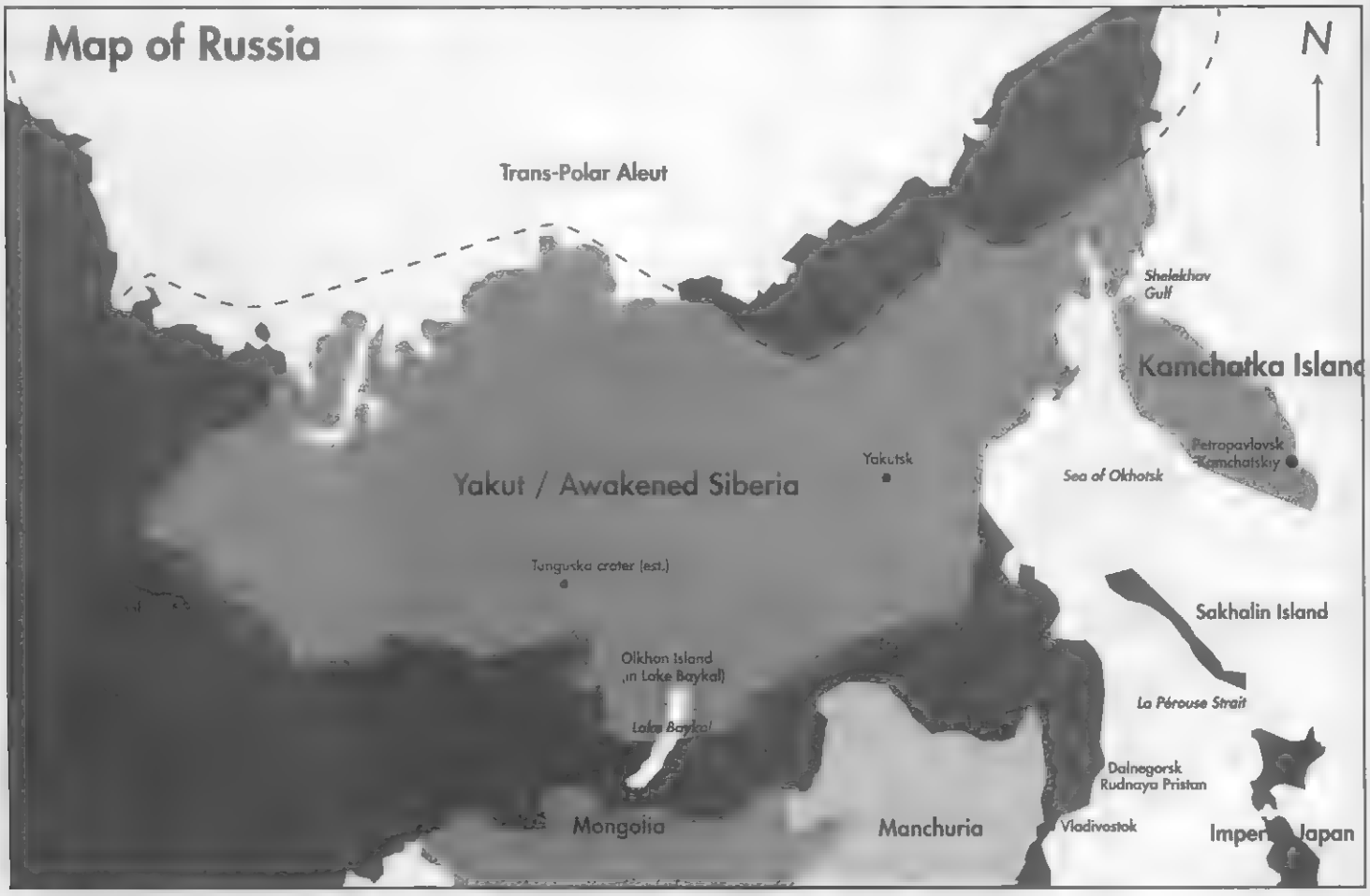
I also discovered that Vladivostok is a smuggler's haven. Because it lies relatively close to the Siberian wilderness, smugglers who survive getting in and out bring with them lots of virgin magical telesma. I was even more surprised to discover that some of these smugglers even make the run across the Bering Sea to bring some of these magical Siberian goods to our very own Seattle metroplex.

As always, expect these posts to contain their own biases. We've got everything from Russian nationalists to Canadian criminals posting here, so read between the lines. If you're thinking of getting a look-see at what Yamatetsu plans to do, or you plan to get in on the tailslegging action, check out this file. Because anything goes in the Wild East.

● Captain Chaos

Transmitted on 30 June 2059, at 21:17:05 (EST)

MacDougall 98



HISTORY

by Raskolnikov

Greetings, friends! The good Captain has asked this humble Russian to give you an accounting of our nation's tragic and glorious history, with specific attention to my home port, Vladivostok. I hope for your sake that you Westerners do not still consider all Russians to be evil communists intent on subverting your capitalist institutions and way of life. While some of those hard-liners are still around, the majority of us are in the same boat as you. We do what we can to struggle and survive in the shadows of these Awakened times. Someday we hope to see a future where we Russians can once again extend our support to other nations, but for now, we fight to keep and regain what is ours. Now let me tell you about my home.

Vladivostok began as a military outpost in the mid-1800s, after Czar Alexander signed an agreement with imperial China to establish a border between us. As more and more merchant ships came to visit Golden Horn Bay, the outpost also became a prime trading port. If our foolish czar had not sold Alaska to the Americans soon afterward, our city might have grown even greater than it is. For many, many years, however, Vladivostok has been Russia's main Pacific trading port, as well as the base of operations for our Pacific fleet.

In 1954, after World War II, the communists who ran our Soviet Union at the time closed Vladivostok to foreign traffic due to its importance to naval operations in the area. Instead of choking the city into stagnation, however, the years of silence actually accelerated our city's growth, as dozens of enterprises sprang up to support the sailors stationed here.

When the Soviets, who had failed our people, fell from power, Vladivostok opened itself to foreign commercial vessels once again. Our city entered into a partnership agreement with other ports on the Pacific, including the city of Tacoma, Washington, prompting trans-Pacific trade between two former Cold War rivals. As the second millennium was coming to a close, Vladivostok's future looked bright for the third.

PRELUDE TO WAR

Our Rodina has always been hindered by foreign foes, and so we once again faced opposition but a few years into the twenty-first century as war erupted to the south on the Korean peninsula. Half a century before, in the aftermath of World War II, Korea had been divided into a communist North and a republican South, and the two sides fought a protracted war to keep it that way. Well, as some American president once put it, a house divided against itself cannot stand, and the Korean houses inevitably fell in 2005.

◉ "Rodina" is Russian for "motherland."
◉ Webster

North Korea had lost much of its communist backing at the time, as Russia and China endured internal problems and changes of their own. A significant portion of the North Korean military was tied up with "protecting" communist interests in China, and the country's generally weak economy was suffering as well. When a communist dissident assassinated South Korean President Rhee, General Yun, commander of the army of the Republic of Korea, seized control of the country—with the backing of Japanese corporations, who anticipated economic advantages should Korea reunify. The North stood as a prime target for Yun's aggression. When conflict between the Koreas broke out, the North expected interference (once again) from the South's American and Japanese allies, especially as the Japanese slowly inched toward becoming an imperial state once again. North Korea's attack against Japan, while defensible on the grounds of undue and unwarranted interference in its affairs, was ill-conceived and served only to escalate the conflict. Tensions between Mother Russia and the Americans grew, and the Americans began to conduct aggressive naval maneuvers. They were taking their self-appointed and egotistical role as "world policeman" very seriously, especially in light of the Libya-Israel chemical-nuclear exchange the year before. As it was, we Russians wisely chose to stay out of it and protect our own interests.

◉ Settle down, kiddies, I don't want to have to cut another 6.5 MP of political bickering—take it to the appropriate board. Yes, I realize half of you think Rasko's a slobbering nationalist, or that the Russkies betrayed their Korean comrades, and so on. Truth is, Rasko's a proud Russian, all right, but that's all he is, and I'm not going to slot him for that alone. I thought it best to get the history from the eyes and ears of a real, vodka-swillin', fur-hat-wearin' Russian, and he's the only one who responded to my requests on this one
◉ Captain Chaos

Transmitted on 30 June 2059, at 22:45:13 (EST)

◉ It was the Second Korean War (Korea II) that instigated a dramatic change in Japanese policy. Since before the turn of the century, the Japanese had been slowly rebuilding their military and granting it increased privileges that the Allies had taken away in WWII. Japanese corporations were beginning to rankle under continued American dominance, and they exerted political clout to back conservative and nationalist politicians, who were eager to see Japan's empire reborn. When Korea II broke out, the imperialists gained even more power in the face of the "Korean threat." This threat was not portrayed as military in nature, however, but as economic—Korea's instability was dangerous to the economic prosperity of the Pacific Rim and Japan's domination of it. Japan's populace was bombarded with propaganda implying that the Koreans and other "inferior" Asians were dangerous to the Japanese because of their faults, and that it was necessary for the Japanese to exert a patronizing control over their lesser brothers to protect themselves and keep hold of their privileged position.

This situation was compounded when a battered North Korea backed up its threats against Japanese interference and launched several Nadong missiles at Japan. The warheads failed to explode—a good thing, as Japanese soldiers later discovered that those Nadongs were packing very crude nuclear warheads. This gave the propaganda campaign a final push, proving that the Americans' defensive umbrella could not be relied on, and the rest is history. Imperial Japan was reborn in 2006.
◉ Rising Son

Things remained tense in Vladivostok throughout the war. Ironically, the New York earthquake kept the Americans mostly out of the conflict, and China did little more than increase arms shipments. Russian naval forces at Vladivostok stood ready for deployment, partially in case the war spilled out of control, but mostly in case the Chinese or another "superpower" entered the fray. The only significant problems arose with sheltering and carrying for the thousands of North Korean communist refugees who fled to us when their government collapsed. Even after the South Koreans soundly defeated the North and the war had subsided, our forces remained on alert, because the Japanese were now building up their forces at a fevered pace.

Our vigilance served us well when the Sovereign American Indian Movement seized a nuclear missile silo and launched a Lone Eagle missile at our country in 2009. Wary of American tricks, we still managed to down the missiles before they could harm our people. We now understand the truth behind the attack, and we blame both the SAIM for targeting our homeland and the Americans for being so irresponsible with their security.

◉ There's no proof that the Russkies actually managed to down the missiles—quite the contrary, in fact. They just seemed to not go off, and General Secretary Chelenko took credit for averting a crisis.
◉ Spin Control

◉ Those missiles were never intended to go off. The SAIM modified them. They didn't want to kill anyone, they merely wanted the threat itself to draw attention to the Native Americans' plight.
◉ Eagle Eye

◉ Well, I can see the job market for historical revisionism is grim, as you all seem to have nothing to do but hang out on this board. Can we move on, please?
◉ Skeptic

The Lone Eagle strike was quite disturbing to our people and served to illuminate the threats posed to us by outside nations. Wisely, Chelenko chose at this time to once again close Vladivostok to foreign traffic. Our national interests became our priority, our military was strengthened, and Chelenko led a new regime to power. Events in following years, such as the VITAS epidemics and the chaos of the Awakening, proved this to be the correct path, and the port remained closed.

◎ The sudden closure of Vladivostok hurt a lot of corporations, particularly the Japanacorps. By then the Resource Rush was in full swing, and a lot of Pacific Rim companies had begun major projects in Vladivostok and the surrounding countryside. When the Iron Curtain went up again on the East, they lost millions of nuyen in investments. This would come back to haunt the Russians when Vladivostok reopened again in 2043.
◎ Nyder

◎ The closing of the port also meant a boom in smuggling. Naturally, all those sailors wanted to get their hands on all kinds of recreational items, and so it didn't take long for a thriving black market to spring up.
◎ The Flying Canadian

New World

In 2011, the Awakening struck and Russia was shaken to its core. Despite our remote isolation, this event stretched thin the fabric of our society. Far to the north in 2012, an unexpected earthquake ripped a chasm across the Kamchatka Peninsula, allowing the sea to rush in and claim a new path. Without warning, some elemental force had created the island of Kamchatka, separating this new geographical feature from the mainland by a fifty-kilometer strait that now connected the Bering Sea and the Sea of Okhotsk.

Within Vladivostok itself, the Awakening wrought many changes. First, UGE brought a new variety of people into the world, those known as elves and dwarfs—but we Russians took it in stride. Magic was a different matter, but eventually, we became accustomed to it, even if we remained suspicious of those who practiced it. Siberia transformed into a wondrous and dangerous land almost overnight, and old tales, legends and nightmares seemed to have been given life. When ingentisization (more commonly, and more cruelly, known as goblinization) struck and transformed a third of the city's population into orks and trolls, my people finally broke under the strain of such rapid change and too many shocks. Fear and panic reigned in the streets. For what seemed weeks on end in 2022, a night did not go by without a superstitious mob lynching at least a dozen goblinized folk. The second wave of VITAS quelled the violence, but then an influx of metahuman refugees nearly sparked it to life again. As the Japanese dogs attempted to ship all of their metahumans out of sight to the island prison of Yomi, many of the changelings fled rather than be rounded up like animals. Vladivostok's smugglers quickly began making a profit from the desperation of these exiles, and the metahuman population in Vladivostok boomed. The terror that had gripped our streets wore off with time, and soon we were embracing metahumanity with an enlightened view seen in far too few places around the world. Before long, our city became known as a haven of sorts for metahumans, the "anti-Yomi," and the downtrodden came streaming in from all around the Pacific Rim. Because of the city's distance from Russia's leadership and the chaos of the times, this radical shift in the composition of our population went largely unheeded by Moscow. Those guiding our motherland were further distracted by the assassination of General Secretary Chelenko in 2016 by an unknown party.

◎ Did I read that right? A third of the population of Vladivostok is ork or troll?
◎ Ataturk

◎ Actually, well over half of the city's population is metahuman. Vladivostok is located very near the Awakened nation of Siberia, and it's relatively close to Manchurian China, which also has a high concentration of metahumans. If you throw in Japanese metahumans fleeing Japanese pogroms, it's no wonder that humans are in the minority over there.
◎ Socio Pat

In 2017, we were forced to send our troops to the far north to defend our listening posts, oil and gas recovery sites and geothermal plants against the so-called Trans-Polar Aleut tribes. After they destroyed several of our power generators and receiver stations in retaliation for resource "exploitation," segments of the Interior Army moved to isolate these tribals. Our army was driven back by the land itself through the magic of the Great Ghost Dance. In 2018, we were forced to surrender our northern border areas to the new Trans-Polar Aleut nation.

ALL ENEMIES, FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC

Our Rodina faced its worst crisis in early 2030, when Awakened forces deep in the heart of Siberia overthrew the government of the autonomous republic of Yakut. Denouncing the Russian Republic and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), they proclaimed their independence as the new Awakened nation of Yakut and declared all lands east of the Ural Mountains as theirs. This act was a traitorous blow to Russia, as many of their forces were recruited from metahumans who had previously been welcomed and aided by our people. Certain ethnic groups, such as the Evenk and Ussuri tribesmen who had long been part of our Commonwealth, and criminal gangs also took part in the insurgency.

◎ Don't just blame the metas. I doubt the Yakutians (or Siberians as pretty much everyone calls them) would have been so well-armed if not for your little smuggler's paradise and your country's increased militarization. Not to mention all the Siberian members of the Interior Army who "defected" and took their guns, tanks and rockets with them.
◎ Reality Czech

◎ It wasn't lawyers, guns and money that retook Siberia, it was magic, pure and simple. They pulled a mini-Ghost Dance on the Russians that knocked them clear back to Moscow. The Siberians must've picked it up from the NANs, probably from the Aleuts, and the Russians just couldn't defend against it (for the second time, no less).
◎ Leatherneck

◘ Not to mention they had dragons behind the effort, just like the Amazonians did. And I've heard some powerful elven mages backed up the shamans for some of the real hoop-kickin' magic. I wouldn't be surprised if they got some kind of artifact from the Tunguska crater too ... .
◘ Gollum

◘ Bulldrek. I was there, part of a merc crew called in by a desperate Russian commander in 2031 to replace troops he lost to the newly established Euro War front. We never saw any dragons, nor did we see exploding volcanoes, earthquakes, or other Ghost Dance effects. What we did see—and fight—was a committed, well-equipped guerrilla army that not only knew the terrain intimately, but also had the terrain working for them, taking liberal amounts of help from spirits. With good tacticians, strong shamans, shapeshifters and spirits, half the time we couldn't find the Siberians, much less engage them. They penetrated our perimeters with ease, again and again. Our air support was useless because they kept sabotaging it on the ground. Granted, some of their spirit allies were like nothing I've ever seen. The mage in my crew identified one as similar to a "man-of-the-woods," and that one nearly killed my entire unit on its own. They also used an assortment of trained paranimals. But what really won it for the Siberians were three factors: surprise, home turf and the damn Russian winter.
◘ METal Head

◘ I once scanned an archaic vid reel of one of the battles and—I swear on the Holy Credstick of Truth—the Siberians were charging the Russians on the backs of woolly mammoths! The big hairy beasties were soaking up rounds, and they actually knocked over an APC. Can you imagine being trampled or gored by one of those?
◘ Vidphreque Unique

◘ Are you really, absolutely, without a doubt, for-fraggin'-sure there were no dragons involved?
◘ The Laughing Man
"HA! Fraggin' HA!"

◘ Quite.
◘ Orange Queen

Alarmed by this turn of events, Moscow dispatched Interior Army forces to overthrow the upstart rebels. Our forces were turned back and swept aside by the Yakut forces, backed by powerful magic and Awakened creatures. Our armies were also stung by Yakut sympathizers, who wrecked supply lines and sabotaged the effort to reclaim our land. The lingering effects of the Crash of '29 also hindered our response, as telecommunications and satellite surveillance were still crippled. Soon enough, the Yakut forces advanced south and west, seizing the districts of Krasnoyarsk, Yamalia, Khantia-Mansia and several others. Interior Army forces were barely able to consolidate their strength in the field before they were overrun. Before we knew it, Russia had lost most of its Siberian hinterland, save for a thin ribbon of land to the south extending from the Urals to the Sea of Japan.

As forces on both sides dug in for the harsh Siberian winter, our economy began to feel the effects of the war, both from the loss of Siberian natural resources and from the manpower and production strain the war exerted on Russian factories. Instead of joining arms with the Russians to struggle through these crises, many ethnic minorities and political outcasts took advantage of the situation and declared their independence from our Rodina as well. Within a few months, the situation had grown intolerable, with leaders of Belarus, the Ukraine and several newly formed "states" engaging in countless crimes against us, including hoarding food while our people starved. All across the land, "revolutionaries" were crawling out from under their rocks, stirring up dissent in many cities and even seizing a few, such as the anarchists who took over Kronstadt. Interior Army forces were forced to establish a second front in order to protect our Commonwealth, and Russian troops moved in to crush the insolent traitors in 2031.

Typically enough, the Polish regime backed the claims of these fools and moved to support them militarily. We moved to punish this interference by invading Poland in return and seizing key industrial and resource centers. The Poles appealed to their big brother allies, and soon enough, our forces were defending themselves from an assortment of aggressors. Wisely, the newly formed UCAS chose to abstain from the "Euro Wars," as they were dubbed. Unfortunately, imperialist nations like the United Kingdom and Germany chose to "protect interests" to which they had no right or claim.

Though not directly involved in the action of either conflict, Vladivostok nevertheless felt the effects of both. The nearby threat of invasion from Yakut increased tension in the city, as Interior Army troops fought to keep Vladivostok from being physically cut off from Russia. During the Euro Wars, the Pacific Fleet remained on high alert, as a warning to enemies such as Japan against attempting to take advantage of our misfortune.

Aftermath

In the end, the Euro Wars went badly for our people. While Poland fell before us, our offensive was stalled west of Poznan, just short of the Oder River and the German border. Our momentum was regained when we made a surprise air strike on Berlin and our paratroopers seized key military facilities around the airports, throwing the Germans into disarray and allowing us to enter the city. After the mysterious *Nightwraith* strike in January of 2033, however, our advance all but ceased. Our forces were unable to maintain their positions and withdrew from Germany.

When the Islamic militants surged northward in 2034, we were forced to divert several armies south. This reduction in forces emboldened resistance in many areas we occupied, and we were subsequently forced to withdraw from Poland, the Ukraine, Belarus, the Baltics and Kronstadt. The government in Poland, which had become quite amenable to Russian priorities, fell soon afterward.

The most disturbing development in my view was the installation of a new power bloc in the Russian government, when General Secretary Kropunin was forced to resign over the Euro War and Yakut failures and the Democratic Recovery Alliance seized the reins. The Alliance may have had good economic sense, shown by their decision to reopen the port of Vladivostok in 2035 to outside traders in a desperate attempt to infuse the city with new capital. Unlike our previous reopening half a century earlier, however, this time our port drew few merchants. Even the elves of the newly formed Tir Tairngire preferred to trade with our Awakened neighbor to the north. The megacorporations also stayed away for the most part, investing nothing more than token offices and limited joint ventures.

◗ Of course they did. Corps have long memories. A lot of the Japanacorps remembered all too well how the Russkies fragged them over the last time when they suddenly closed off Vladivostok. As the saying goes, once bitten, twice shy.
◗ Nyder

◗ Another thing that hurt the Russians was their lack of familiarity with market economics and the capitalist way of doing business, made even worse by their monolithic state bureaucracy. Many company representatives simply did not want to put up with the neurotic suspicion, deviousness and small-mindedness of the petty bureaucrats and commissars they were trying to work with.
◗ The Keynesian Kid
"Greed IS Good"

Our failure to either retake Yakut or to claim new territory in Eastern Europe took its toll on our country's resources, and after the wars Russia fell into a deep economic recession from which the Alliance was unable to save us. In 2037, they fell from power to be replaced by the National Soviet Reconstructionists (NSR). The NSR guided our nation with a firm hand out of economic despair and into a new revival, back on the road to prosperity and greatness once again.

◗ Something tells me that road lies straight through the heart of Siberia and central Europe. Euro Wars II, anyone?
◗ Red Eye

◗ Not if the megas have anything to say about it. Lofwyr sure ain't going to sit idly by and watch the Russkies interfere with all his Eastern European projects.
◗ Warsaw Witch

RECENT EVENTS

Yamatetsu's announcement that they were going to relocate their headquarters to Vladivostok shocked and surprised those of us who reside there. Since then, city officials have been pathetically scurrying around like cockroaches before a flashlight to clean up our city's image, and contractors have been falling all over themselves in an attempt to win Yamatetsu building contracts. Yet some of us feel suspicious toward a corp that still carries the stink of Japan and are wary of increased corporate interest—and power—among our people. Already, too many factions of our government are tempted and manipulated by the money foreign interests represent. If Yamatetsu is to be accepted in our city, they will have to prove themselves loyal not only to metahumans, but to Russia as well.

The announcement has also sparked a wave of disparagement from the Japanese, who view Yamatetsu's move to our "metahuman backwater hellhole" as the last gasp of a dying corporation. Yet Yamatetsu's sacrifices in the name of metahumanity have struck a chord with many residents here, who are willing to support Yamatetsu in the hopes that they will be a champion for their causes in the future. Ironically, the move has also put our city in the spotlights of various corps that think that perhaps Yamatetsu knows something they don't, or that Yamatetsu is creating a situation in Russia that they can exploit. Wuxing, Shiawase and even Mitsuhama have greatly increased their surveillance and operations in this region.

◘ Shiawase's interest in Far East Russia is more mundane in focus than the others. That company is looking to exploit the natural resources of the Khabarovsk and Primorskiy regions, as well as some of the oil and natural gas fields up near the northern half of Sakhalin Island.
◘ Harker

◘ The Japanacorps aren't going to find pickings as easy to come by as they were in the Philippines and California. Paranoia and suspicion seem to be ingrained Russian characteristics, and the Russians are well aware of Japan's track record.

Also take into account that well over half the population of the Russian Far East is metahuman, and that a lot of metahuman residents in Vladivostok used to be Japanese refugees who didn't want to go to Yomi. They'd rather invite a fenrir wolf into their homes than let the Japanacorps set up shop.
◘ Bure

◘ Wuxing has been taking advantage of that anti-Japan sentiment to expand its operations here, especially since Yamatetsu decided to join Wuxing's Pacific Prosperity Group.
◘ Zmei@prm.tenset.ru

SMUGGLING ROUTES

by The Flying Canadian

Well, the whole reason Cap put together this document in the first place was to get the dirt on smuggler havens, eh? Well, if you ignore this whole Yamatetsu thing, Vladivostok certainly is one of them. The native, untouched wilderness is a good source for magical telesma and other natural resources, and there are also several wild paracritters that collectors would pay a very worthwhile sum to obtain.

When Vladivostok closed to the public in 2009, the Russians started a chain of events that has led this fine Russian sprawl to become their own entry in the pages of smuggler history. Y'see, Vladivostok was too isolated for its own good, and all those Russian sailors and their families had needs. Naturally, the closed border made those needs profitable, and before you could say "t-bird" there were probably more Russkies employed as smugglers than as naval cannon fodder. Compared with ego-heavy pirate-punk locales like the Carib League, the smugglers of the Russian Far East are master artisans. They've been doing it longer, and in colder weather to boot. Drek, they were making a killing at it when the rest of the world still thought of piracy and smuggling as historical adventures.

Black market business really started to boom after the Awakening, when various corps and cults began developing an interest in magical research and demand increased for magical fetishes and telesma. The Yakut revolution put a serious crimp in that angle, however, and the reopening of the Vladivostok port in 2035 wreaked some havoc across the board. But biz is biz, and there's always somebody wanting something they can't get.

In 2044, Mitsuhama sent a team into Awakened Siberia to negotiate with the Siberian government for permission for its magical researchers to conduct studies there. The Siberians were in no mood to negotiate and sent the Mitsuhama delegation straight back to Japan.

◘ The talk on the streets here is that the Siberians sent all but four of MCT's delegation back in little bits, torn apart by shapeshifters, as an adamant sign of their refusal. And the only reason they spared four of them was because somebody had to carry the pieces back to Japan.
◘ Zmei@prm.tenset.ru

Undaunted by their failure at negotiating an open business relationship, Mitsuhama made it known in the Vladivostok shadows that they were willing to pay very generously for telesma smuggled into Japan. It wasn't long before Russians in the Far East discovered that a *lot* of people on the Pacific Rim, even as far away as the Seattle Metroplex, were willing to pay generously for the rare Siberian goods. And, as the Americans say, that's all she wrote.

◘ Magical goods can earn the smuggler top nuyen, but they aren't the only things worth smuggling out of Siberia. The region also has a wealth of rare minerals, namely gold, diamonds and uranium. The NSR still operates mines and ore refineries in the areas it controls, as do a few megas with clout. Of course, these operations frequently have "accidents" that the Siberians claim they have no involvement in.
◘ Svarog@prm.tenset.ru

Though every smuggler has a favorite route, there are two major smuggling routes worth mentioning. The first parallels the Trans-Siberian Railroad that runs from Vladivostok to Moscow. At various stations along the railroad, smugglers branch off to other routes into Siberia, as well as Mongolia, Uighur Xinjiang and the Kazakhs. Besides creeping through the forests around Vladivostok, you might want to check out places like Lake Baykal and Tunguska while you're in this hemisphere. The second smuggling route runs by sea from Vladivostok to the Seattle Metroplex, with refit points at Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy and Anchorage, Athabasca. Steer clear of Rudnaya Pristan, though—it's a bad scene all around.

THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILROAD

Running 9,600 kilometers from Moscow to Vladivostok, the Trans-Siberian Railroad is the longest continual railroad in the world. Passing through the narrow ribbon of territory still controlled by the Russians, the railroad connects Vladivostok and the Russian Far East to the rest of their "motherland," a sort of umbilical cord connecting a fetus to its mother.

The section of railway most smugglers are interested in is the eastern half, from Khabarovsk to Novosibirsk. This leg of the railroad is the most remote, which is both an advantage and a risk. Sheer distance from anything of importance means it is the least watched by the UGB border patrols, but its isolation also makes it particularly vulnerable to attacks by bandits and various nasty Siberian creatures.

• Beware the Border Guards. Though they operate as an arm of the UGB, who are also the Russian secret police (like the old KGB), these guys sport heavy arms and armor equivalent to a regular Red Army unit. To help them carry out their duties in catching us basmachi, the Border Guards receive armored personnel carriers, scout cars and armed helicopters. Heck, some Border Guard units even operate light tanks.
• Bogatyr@aspw.zsu.ru

• True, but most Border Guard equipment (heck, most Russian equipment) isn't exactly top of the line. Their sensors, countermeasures and other electronics are at least three or four generations behind the SOTA. Also, the Russians haven't yet developed their own countermeasures against electronic deception (ED), so anyone with even a basic ED set can sleaze past UGB border patrols with a minimal amount of trouble.
• Preezrak

• Don't count on all the Border Guards carrying or driving outdated gear. While most of them struggle along with the older stuff, there's a few units that get to play with just-off-the-assembly-line toys. With the nationalists in power, we can expect them to spend more and more on their military, which means more and more units will be keeping pace with us technologically. Hey, it makes life interesting.
• Polecat

• Border Guard vehicles are light on both armor and armaments, but beware: If you smoke one Border Guard BRDM (that's a patrol vehicle sorta like a Ferrari Appaloosa, but less well made), you'll

immediately attract dozens of other Border Guard patrols like blood attracts sharks. And those reinforcements will be heavily armored and loaded for bear, with tracked APCs, combat helicopters and even tanks. And if they're really torqued, they might even invite a few friends from the Interior Army, or, if you're really unlucky, the Red Army.
◗ Colonel Cobra

◗ Another thing worth keeping in mind: more often than you might expect, what Border Guards are out there will likely be too busy tangling with a Siberian beastie or guerrilla team to come gunning after you.
◗ Peri Stroyka

◗ Don't get complacent about the bandits. While some of them actually use horses and old hunting rifles, others will be riding Awakened critters with movement powers and may be calling nature spirits down on your head as well. A lot of them ended up with Russian military surplus after the war, too.
◗ Rogue

Along the Siberian stretch of the Trans-Siberian, trains run infrequently, with a legitimate train passing through any one particular point once every two to three hours, tops. If it's carrying passengers or anything pricey, expect a few guards or drones. Minimum crew on any train will be two, usually in the first engine car. Don't be surprised if you come across freight-hoppers holed up in a grainer or boxcar, either.

◗ This system ain't a SOTA monorail line, it's old-school all the way That means the most a decker can do to help is alter schedules or mess with remote rail switches. Nor are these things rigged.
◗ Red Wraith

◗ I've heard rumors of smugglers who've jury-rigged rail-running wheels onto ordinary ground vehicles and used the railroad itself as part of their smuggling route. Apparently, when the smugglers are ready to jump off the line, they simply raise the rail runners and engage their normal ground wheels.
◗ Muramets@apcb.suz.ru

◗ If you're looking for a good way station on this route, there's a couple of smuggler crews with repair facilities near the towns of Zeya, Kansk and Asino. They do mediocre fix-up work for an inflated fee (it's not like they've got competition!). There's also a fixer in Vladivostok named Petr who can hook you up. He used to be KGB before the power balance shifted. He's older than God, but he knows everybody and everything in the town, and he specializes in caches and safehouses along this route if you need to duck the UGB.
◗ Link

The Primorskiy Taiga

In case you skipped your geography sims, Vladivostok belongs to the administrative division of Primorskiy, which sits in a geographic region where two different climate systems overlap. Here, the northern extent of monsoon country meets the southern edge of the Siberian taiga.

◗ For the ecologically challenged, a taiga is a heavy growth of coniferous forest found in the northern temperate zones of Eurasia and parts of North America. Think of it as an evergreen version of a rain forest.
◗ Woppler the Weatherman

The clash of taiga and tropical jungle results in a remarkable diversity of plants and animals living in this area, with many species found here that apparently don't exist in any other part of the world. In other words, you can come here to be eaten by new and exciting animals. Most of the woodland surrounding Vladivostok is almost impassable, except on those paths and trails created by centuries of human and animal travel. The taiga is also home to several fierce predators, the Amur leopards and Siberian tigers, in addition to known paranimals such as blackberry cats, leshy and fenrir wolves. All told, it's safer to fly over than hike or drive through, and even then keep your sensors peeled.

◗ Both the leopards and tigers were on the verge of extinction at the turn of the millennium, but since then they've made a remarkable comeback. Not because of any protective environmental measures, mind you: poachers made a fortune in the Russian Far East, mostly due to the corruption and incompetence of the government. No, since the mid-2030s, the cat population has been steadily and inexplicably growing. By 2037 they were off the Endangered Species List, and by 2041 they were off the Threatened Species list.

Until recently, the leopards and tigers primarily hunted the deer and wild goats that live in the taiga, so they didn't pose much of a threat to people living on the outskirts of the forest. But an increasing number of reports describe incidents of tigers and leopards killing domestic animals, and there have been many individual sightings of these creatures uncharacteristically near roads and clearings—all of which is making the locals pretty nervous. Word is that it's only a matter of time before the government starts offering bounties for leopard and tiger pelts.
◗ Yarovit@usys.vladnet.ru

◗ Some of the great cats may be more than they seem. A certain amount of evidence points to a fairly large population of shapeshifters living in and around Vladivostok, which is no surprise considering that city's tolerant attitude toward all metahumans. Most of the known shifters are tigers and leopards, though there have also been some reports of bear, wolf and fox shifters.
◗ Ahotnik@guam.krz.ru

◗ The shapeshifters are agents of the Siberian nation! Why do people continue to disbelieve this? It is no coincidence that the tiger population increased dramatically at the time of the Siberian uprising!
◗ Urdul@irk.tenset.ru

◎ Rumor, sykavich, nothing more.
◎ Rassoodok@usys.vladnet.ru

◎ The taiga also boasts at least one non-critter being for us shadowtypes to avoid—the baba yaga, a spirit-creature that manifests as an ugly old woman, sometimes with only one eye, who has a taste for metahuman flesh. (It looks a lot like the Celtic bean sidhe.) This being appears only at night, and only in deeply forested areas. But it's not as easy to avoid as these conditions make it sound—for one thing, there've been too many sightings reported for this thing to be considered rare.
◎ Mick the Irish

◎ Seems every culture has a version of the ugly, flesh-eating woman who lives in the forest and eats unwanted stepchildren and such. The only real surprise is that these things haven't sprung up in forested areas all across the world—but then, I guess the original stories all come from Europe anyway.
◎ EthnocenTrixy

Lake Baykal

Situated some two thousand kilometers northwest of Vladivostok, Lake Baykal is one of the seven wonders of the natural world (if you believe the Russian tourist guides, that is). Over thirty-one thousand square klicks in area and sixteen hundred meters deep at its lowest point, this crescent-shaped body of water is as big as the individual Great Lakes. However, it's the weakest link in the land ribbon connecting the Far East to the Russian main, which means near-constant skirmishing between Russian forces and Siberian guerrillas. The Siberians control the northern half of Lake Baykal's shorelines, while the Russians control the southern half and maintain air superiority in the area.

The Trans-Siberian Railroad makes a stop along the southwest horn of the lake, in the town of Irkutsk. In the past, it was a vacation resort for Russians on holiday, but only a small handful of vacationers come to Irkutsk nowadays. The large majority of "visitors" to Irkutsk are the soldiers of the Interior Army, coming from or heading to the disputed boundary between the Russian and Siberian halves of the lake, some 240 kilometers away to the northeast. A few homegrown "hospitality services" have arisen to meet the soldiers' needs, but otherwise Irkutsk is fairly shadow-free.

◎ Despite the volatile military situation around Lake Baykal, lots of talisleggers still brave the risk of getting caught by either the Russians or the Siberians. You see, the place is simply overflowing with mana. The native Buryats call Lake Baykal the "Sacred Sea," and with good reason: one peek into the astral is all it takes to explain it. The aura of power permeates every natural thing in the vicinity of the lake, making it a prime source for virgin enchanting material. Unfortunately, most of the good pickings are found on the Siberian half to the north. Pollution from Russian timber cutters on the southern half of the lake ruined most of the enchantment potential of the land there.
◎ Nerpa@irk.tenset.ru

◎ Another interesting feature of Lake Baykal is the diversity of flora and fauna living in and around the lake. As a matter of fact, some species have been discovered here that exist nowhere else in the world.

Take the Siberian reindeer to the north of the lake, for example. Quite a few of these antlered beauties have exhibited strange and intriguing powers. There are some who claim they're not reindeer at all, but spirits of some kind, or perhaps shapeshifters. To the south of the lake, you can find herds of humped horses, which are prized as fast and steady mounts. They're hard to find and harder to catch, and they seem to have an ingrained ability to lead and command other horses. There's also woolly mammoths, which some Siberians have trained as mounts for patrols.

But beware: lots of natural predators, both mundane and paranormal, also call Lake Baykal their home, and some of them are as mean as the nastiest critters from such wild lands as Amazonia, the Scottish Marches, or the Mojave Desert. Many big-game hunters in Russia commission expeditions costing as much as a million nuyen in search of these one-of-a-kind trophies. And most of them never return.
◎ Beastmaster

◎ There's a lot of elk in this region, and each herd is led by an Awakened Grandfather Elk. They protect not just their brethren, but the area as well—they have some sort of power that forces unwelcome visitors to leave. The Russians believe that the Siberian shamans actually talk with the Grandfathers, and I'm inclined to agree.
◎ Wulf

Halfway along the length of the lake sits the largest island in Lake Baykal, Olkhon Island, which lies about eight kilometers offshore from the northern coast. The native inhabitants of this region, the Buryats, believed that the gods once lived on this dry island, which has its shores guarded by steep, rocky cliffs. Currently the shorelines near the island are the focus of skirmishing between Russian and Siberian forces.

◎ A few magicians who've heard the legends about Olkhon Island speculate that the area might be a place of power for conjuring spirits. To date, however, none has tried to put this theory to the test, mostly because the fighting makes it too dangerous to try.
◎ Nerpa@irk.tenset.ru

◎ Ever since the fighting began, no one's set foot on the island. Not for lack of trying, though; both the Siberians and the Russians have tried to land forces on the island, but within a fortnight those units that had landed on Olkhon had literally vanished without a trace.
◎ Golomyanka@ude.tenset.ru

◎ I ran drone cover for a merc team that landed on Olkhon Island, despite warnings from spooked Russian soldiers. They set up a camp, and midway through the night this freaky localized snow-

storm hit. I picked up some weird crackling over the acoustic mic, and the drone I sent over spotted a sentry who looked like he had fallen asleep. As I got closer, I realized he wasn't showing up on thermo, and when I got a good vidframe, he looked frozen solid. It must have jarred me, because I lost control of the drone and it barreled into him, knocking him over. He shattered into many frozen flesh clumps. I started screaming an alert and buzzed the camp with my Wandjina. There weren't any thermal signatures left in the camp, and no movement that I could scan. On the next flyby, I thought I glimpsed a woman who was so white as to be luminous, but she faded away. I bailed after that.

◗ Blade

Along the northeast shores of the lake rise the Barguzin Mountains, like the palisades of a castle's wall overshadowing its moat. With summits reaching as high as 2,800 meters, these mountain ridges, firmly in Siberian territory, have kept civilization at bay, as neither settlers nor logging camps have been successful in penetrating the ribbed terrain. What makes the Barguzins significant is that they are the source of some minor volcanic activity, which expresses itself as clusters of hot springs tucked amongst the river valleys. I highly recommend them as a relaxing stop-off point.

◗ Just keep your eyes peeled for Siberian firebirds. They're likely to persuade you to walk off a cliff so they can make a meal out of you.

◗ Rabid

◗ Firebird feathers are extremely valuable as telesma material, and if you can collect some, you'll make good cred. Just don't try to sell 'em in Russia—a lot of spellworms think they're cursed, and that any who use them will fall prey to bad luck and mysterious accidents.

◗ Coven Queen

◗ Be careful of what kinds of magic you use in the Barguzins. I was on a smuggling run with a group of talisleggers into Siberia searching for some mineral telesma radicals. Trying to avoid the fighting going on around Irkutsk, we instead turned off from the Trans-Siberian at Ulan-ude, which sits to the south of the lake on the other side of some smaller ridges. Since there wasn't a lot of fighting on the east side of the lake, we were planning to trek north running parallel to the Barguzins until we reached the northern horn of the lake

We guessed wrong about the situation and ran into a Siberian raiding party. There was an Evenk shaman tagging along with the Siberians, and he summoned a HUGE honking mountain spirit Didn't even break a sweat! I got ready to throw a fireball at the thing as it manifested. As I cut loose on the spell, I was surprised at how powerful the spell I threw was! So were the Siberians—or rather, what still remained of them.

The shaman survived, however; he must have used some spell defense to protect himself from the fireball. But as he was ordering the mountain spirit to attack us, he got hit by a glancing blow from some grenade shrapnel. It wasn't a serious hit, but when he got hit, the spirit suddenly turned on him unexpectedly. After it was finished with him, it turned on us. It took down about three of our group before I was able to banish it.

◗ Gusli@pry.tenset.ru

Of the people living around or near Lake Baykal, the majority belong to two groups: the Evenks and the Buryats. While the Buryats try to distance themselves from the local fighting, the Evenks are staunch supporters of the Siberians and often spearhead the fighting against the Interior Army.

Nearly wiped out by the communists half a century ago, the Evenks have managed to claw their way back from oblivion. Originally reindeer herders, the Evenk culture and lifestyle share many similarities with the American Plains Indians. Even their magical beliefs are strikingly similar, as Evenk shamanism shares many similar traits with that practiced in the Native American Nations.

The Buryats are descended from Mongol nomads who settled in the area many millennia ago. Settling to the east and south of the lake, the Buryats adopted a seminomadic horse culture. In spite of many generations of attempted Russification by the government, many Buryats are also practicing Buddhists, and many of their datsans (monasteries) dot the landscape to the east and south of Lake Baykal.

◗ If you spend any time with any rural or remote Russians or Siberians, don't be too nosy around their houses, especially at night. Even more so if you hear something small moving about, cleaning and so forth. If you disturb the domovoi, their small house spirits, you may regret it. You might also scare it away for good, earning the enmity of your host.

◗ Valenskaia

◗ The Buryats are an odd lot. They take the Russian incursion, the war with the Siberians, and everything else with a contemplative look of "This, too, shall pass." However, they know the lay of the land better than anyone else, so if you're looking for a good guide, ask a Buryat.

◗ Nerpa@irk.tenset.ru

◗ Buddhist monasteries in Russia? I wonder if any of them are kick-butt martial-arts societies?

◗ Shadowslayer

◗ You slot too many kung fu sims, Shadowslayer.

◗ Bung

Tunguska

I thought I'd mention this, because there's been some talk about this place in talislegger circles recently. Back in 1908, there was a huge explosion over the skies of Siberia, about ninety kilometers north of the town of Vanavara, near the Lower Tunguska River. The blast was so immense that witnesses on the Trans-Siberian Railroad some one thousand miles south could see the fireball and feel the earth tremors. Even up until Siberia was closed

off by Awakened forces, Russian and international investigators were unable to determine the cause of the blast, which weighed in at well over forty megatons and flattened trees within three thousand square kilometers.

The most popular theory is that it was a comet or meteorite crash, but who can say? All I know is that it's pretty wicked to view from the sky, because you can still see the blast effect ring, the direction trees have been knocked, and so on.

• Oh, they know all right, but they're not telling. It was a nuclear explosion! Five megatons, they said! Only a nuke could provide that kind of power!
• Roswell

• Catch some history here, willya? This was fragging 1908. The world hadn't even come up with atomic theory yet, let alone nuclear fission.
• Skeptic

• Who said anything about a Russian nuke?
• Roswell

• Roswell, isn't it time for you to be abducted? Anyway, according to the investigations scientists conducted (when the government allowed them to), their optimal hypothesis (i.e., "best guess") was that a celestial body—either an asteroid or a comet—fragmented in an airburst above Tunguska. After fragmentation, the core split into four separate bodies that impacted the earth.

But they also turned up some strange irregularities. After the blast there was accelerated growth of biomass observed in the region of the epicenter, which has continued (at least until Siberia was sealed off). Also, there was an increase in the rate of biological mutations, not only within the epicenter but also along the trajectory of the object over Tunguska. Also, the blast created a number of magnetic disturbances in the Earth's magnetic field when it occurred.
• Hubble

• Actually, we were attempting to whack the rock into orbit, not the other way around.
• The Laughing Man
"HA! Fraggin' HA!"

• ***Sigh*** Boyz and their toyz. You really must behave yourself. That little "accident" nearly woke me from my nap.
• Orange Queen

Anyway, the reason I'm bringing up this ancient history is because rumors have been circulating in Irkutsk and Vladivostok of prospectors uncovering chunks of orichalcum in the ground. Yes, orichalcum. Not itty-bitty nodules, huge chunks of the stuff. And quite a few other metal and mineral radicals, too.

◗ HOLY DREK! How do I get there? There's orichalcum in them thar' hills!
◗ Miner 2049er

◗ It ain't as easy as it sounds, young warrior. First, Tunguska is in the middle of nowhere—no roads, no trails, nothing. You either fly in or walk in, and it's an eleven-hundred-klick hike north from Irkutsk, chummer.

Second, it's in the middle of Awakened Siberia. So that means you have to make your way through the crossfire between the Siberians and Interior Army without getting shot by either side. And even after you get past the skirmishing, you still have to travel through Siberia. And frankly, Siberia is scary. I don't know how to describe it, but it's like some kind of wild, feral atmosphere. As if every predator in Siberia knows where you are and is just waiting for the right opportunity to pounce on you.
◗ Nerpa@irk.tenset.ru

◗ Well, I've been there, and I can tell you that if you make all that effort to get there just to look for orichalcum on the ground, then you're a moron who deserves to be sabercat food. The Russian UGB have been spreading that rumor to get the smugglers and Siberians to clash more, which distracts them both from other activities.
◗ Polecat

Svobodniy

Now, Svobodniy's an interesting place. It's been the home cosmodrome of the Russian space program since 1997 (the previous base, Baikonur, happened to be in Khazakistan when the USSR broke up). Of course, the Russkies weren't doing too well financially, so Svobodniy got off to a slow start. In fact, the Russians sold their *Mir* space station to Harris-3M right before the turn of the century. When the hard-liners got back in, however, they decided to finally put the cosmodrome to use and demanded *Mir* back. Harris-3M politely declined, and things got real tense for awhile. After Libya and Korea, the Russians decided to back off and start all over again. They were just revving up that space program when the Crash, VITAS, and the Awakening hit.

Since then, the Russians have pulled off a few launches, but they haven't pursued any serious projects. They just haven't had the nuyen to fund it. Well, at least until Yamatetsu came along earlier this year and offered to make it a joint venture. I guess they figured that since they were moving their HQ so close, they might as well take advantage of it. Yamatetsu doesn't even have its Vladivostok offices built yet, and there's already crazy activity at the cosmodrome as they refurbish the whole facility. Yamatetsu and the National Supreme Soviet are still hashing out the details, but it's definitely going to be an interesting partnership.

◗ As I understand it, Lofwyr was mighty displeased that Saeder-Krupp had not been given first shot on the deal (or, rather, that Buttercup thought of it first). Saeder-Krupp's keeping close tabs on the project, and you can be sure the worm has something in motion to remove Yamatetsu from the picture.
◗ Sagan

◗ They've been having problems at the cosmodrome with an infestation of Siberian bees lately. It seems huge numbers of the buggers have been drawn there by all the electrical activity, and they've wreaked havoc, causing shorts and brownouts, swarming technicians, dying in the manager's soykaf cup, and so forth. Looks like they may need to hire themselves some exterminators soon.
◗ O Ring

THE SEATTLE SEA RUN

Surprise, surprise! I'll bet most of you folks out there on Shadowland didn't know there *was* a smuggling run between Seattle and Vladivostok. Heck, I'll bet most of you didn't know that Seattle even *trades* with Vladivostok.

Well, it's true. When Vladivostok was first opened at the end of the last millennium, one of the special trading relationships it established was with the Port of Tacoma. When the Russian port shut down after 2009, smuggling took the place of legitimate trade, as the Russkies were still hungry to acquire manufactured goods from the West. For several years the smuggling was one-way only, with manufactured goods going from Tacoma (which later became part of the Seattle Metroplex) to Vladivostok. But when the Russians discovered how profitable talislegging was, they marked Seattle as a prime market, as Westerners in the UCAS were willing to pay top dollar for magical goods. So now the smuggling run works both ways, with smugglers taking high tech goodies out of Seattle and bringing back raw Siberian telesma.

◗ The Seattle route is most difficult at the starting and ending points of the run. At the Vladivostok end, a smuggler has to contend with three distinct forces: the Japanese navy, the Russian navy, and the UGB Border Guards' coastal patrols. And at the Seattle end, smugglers have to deal with the Salish Coastal Patrol and the UCAS Coast Guard. (Well, yeah, there's also the UCAS Navy, but they're in port so often as to be a non-factor.) Probably the "safest" part of the route is the leg in the Bering Sea and North Pacific, between Kamchatka Island to about the Queen Charlotte Islands just west of Tsimshian.
◗ October Red

◗ Even that "safe" route isn't exactly safe. You've got to watch out for the resident wildlife living in that area, such as cetaceans (whales for you landlubbers), sea drakes and megalodons. The waters out there are deep abyssal plains, so some of the resident species can grow pretty big, almost as big as a small frigate.
◗ Doc

◗ One thing to remember, though, is that the ocean is a very big place. A ship could sail for days without sighting another ship, land, or any other living creatures.
◗ Ancient Mariner

Specific routes tend to vary from smuggler to smuggler, usually depending on your mode of transport and time frame, but in most cases they follow roughly the same path. Most runners depart from Vladivostok and head up toward Sakhalin Island.

Some folks make the run through the La Pérouse Strait between Sakhalin and the Japanese island of Hokkaido, but others continue to sail up north through the Tatar Straits and go around the northern tip of the island.

◎ The biggest worry after leaving Peter the Great Bay are the UGB Border Guards. Even though they don't have the big ships the Russian navy has, the Guards do operate several fast attack craft capable of carrying antiship missiles. I think the Border Guards also operate a few frigates and aircraft configured for ASW (Anti-Sub Warfare) ops.
◎ Krazny Omega

◎ Running the La Pérouse Strait is much shorter than navigating around the northern tip of Sakhalin, but it's also very risky, because it's very close to Japan and the Imperial Navy. If you want to run through La Pérouse, your best bet is to do it underwater in a submarine.
◎ Ramius

◎ Even running La Pérouse in a submarine is no cakewalk, Ramius. The strait is a relatively shallow rise (less than a thousand meters) saddled between two very deep basins (over three thousand meters) in the Seas of Okhotsk and Japan. What this means is that there are no thermoclines in the straits to hide from sonar if Japanese ASW patrols are on the prowl. Your best bet at passing through the strait is to take it nice and slow.
◎ Torpedofish

◎ Sakhalin is an interesting place—it was being dug up real good for coal and oil during the Resource Rush. There's still a lot of corporate facilities doing just that, not to mention a fair number of abandoned oil rigs and even a minor Red Navy station. There's a rumor going around that one of the oil rigs is still in use—as a high-security corporate prison, for which mega I'm not sure.
◎ Channel 11

◎ Sakhalin Island is where the main Russian eastern phased-radar array is located. It's mostly pointed south, toward Japan, of course, but you can be sure they pick up quite a few t-birds and so forth doing the Seattle run. Luckily, the Russians seem to be barely able to keep their radar-net on-line these days, much less consistently blanketing the sky for bogeys.
◎ SOTA Jerk

After passing Sakhalin Island, smugglers then make a run toward the southern tip of Kamchatka Island. Most folks usually stop at the city of Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy to refuel and resupply.

◎ Those few who were brave enough to run across the La Pérouse Strait will find their bravery rewarded. Running up from Hokkaido to Kamchatka is a chain of islands known as the Kuriles. With the deep ocean basin on the west side of the chain and the Pacific on the east side, there are plenty of hiding places for a submarine to evade detection.
◎ Ramius

From Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy it's a straight shot east across the Bering Sea to the Athabascan territory of Alaska. Usually hugging close to the Aleutian Islands chain, smugglers generally make another resupply stop around the cities of Kodiak, Anchorage, or Cordova. From there it's a straight run down the coast, just a matter of dodging the occasional Athabascan, Tsimshian, Salish, or UCAS coastal patrol.

Once inside Puget Sound, smugglers have lots of choices. Many of them sail right into port, often in the district of Tacoma. However, many others land at one of the numerous islands near the Seattle Metroplex, where local riggers are waiting to off-load them onto helicopters, boats, and other aircraft to bring the goods into the Metroplex.

Sometimes a smuggler crew will get the haul to Alaska by air or sea, then take it from there by land. It's not usually the most efficient option, but the Athabascan, Tsimshian, and Salish wilderness offers lots of opportunities for hiding out (not to mention the scenery is great).

◎ With the recent upswing of trade (both legitimate and illegitimate) from Russia into Tacoma, the Russian mob, the Vory v Zakone, has been working hard at making inroads into the Tacoma underworld scene. This isn't easy, to say the least, because Tacoma is strong Yakuza territory. At best the Vory should probably be able to gain a small toehold, but no more.
◎ Smiley

Rudnaya Pristan

Caught as we are in the crossfire between the Imperial Japanese Navy, the Russian Pacific Fleet and the Korean pirate crews, smuggling to and from Vladivostok is a hard day's work as is. But there's more trouble anyone thinking of smuggling in these parts should watch out for: the polluted bay of Rudnaya Pristan, some 350 kilometers up the coast northeast from Vladivostok.

Known as "Mineral Harbor" in Russian, Rudnaya Pristan has been poisoned by run-off from Dalnegorsk, a mining town that's been engaging in excessive strip mining of bauxite and boron ore since before the Russian Revolution of 1917. When the Awakening came to Russia, the spell-slingers and seafarers down there discovered, much to their dismay, that the harbor was a natural site of power, but the pollution from Dalnegorsk had perverted its nature, giving birth to toxic earth and water spirits. Some of these puppies have wandered out into the sea and pose a deadly risk to any vessel careless enough to sail too close to the area. I've even run into some nasty air effects in that area while doing fly-overs ... effects that just weren't natural.

◎ Toxic spirits aren't the only danger here, maties. Rudnaya Pristan also attracts a number of mutated paracritters that have been twisted by the harbor's toxic nature. One report claimed an encounter with a sea drake as big as a corvette, while another

report came from a survivor who claimed a sea serpent destroyed his boat with corrosive spittle—it started by burning a hole right in the bottom of the boat.
◉ Yarovit@prm.tenset.ru

◉ Honest-to-Ghost story: I was on a smuggling run on a diesel trawler, from Vladivostok to Seattle. Our info confirmed that the Japanese were conducting exercises near Hokkaido at the time, so we decided to keep close to the shore. We hadn't heard the stories about Rudnaya Pristan at that time.

It was just after EENT, early evening nautical time, when this huge fraggin' sea drake suddenly surfaced right off our port bow. As I watched it with low-light, the thing opened its mouth at us and exhaled. The next thing I knew, I was gagging from something that was burning my lungs out. Instinctively, I climbed up a nearby mast to get out of the poison cloud. Some of the crew on deck weren't so smart and tried to escape by going below decks. They died from what our medico determined to be blister gas poisoning.

But that was to come later. In the meantime, after sharing its bad breath with us, that drake started tearing at the deck with its jaws. We opened fire on the creature, but most of the slugs bounced off the thing. Judging by the calcified build-ups on its skin, I figured it must have had some armor. The thing was huge, too, almost as big as our ship. It managed to snag a member of our crew, and while it was chomping on him, a few sailors broke out a couple of Vigilant autocannons by the stern of the ship and opened up. The heavy ordnance didn't kill the beastie, but it was successful in driving it off.

I don't know about you, chummers, but after that encounter, I think I'll take my chances with the Japanese.
◉ Mannion

◉ Check this out. Throughout the late twentieth century and well into the twenty-first, residents in and around this mining town have reported seeing strange lights and flying objects in the sky, and sometimes on the land. Chip-truth, something's out there.
◉ Selif Echs

◉ Well, don't forget that Dalnegorsk is close to Vladivostok, which is the headquarters for the Russian Pacific Fleet. Between the military aircraft and all the smuggler antics, I'm not surprised to hear of strange sightings.
◉ Mad McPeak

◉ I think we can be more down-to-earth about this. Dalnegorsk has been polluted by extensive strip mining, so it would be reasonable to expect that poisoned ground water could be the cause of hallucinogen-induced sightings.
◉ Skeptic

Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy

Sitting on the severed peninsula of Kamchatka, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy is one of the last outposts of the great Russian Empire. Since the Cold War of the last century, it has served as a submarine base for the Soviet military's Pacific Fleet. It continues to do so today, as a counterbalance to the Imperial Japanese Navy, now that the American government is no longer a player in the Pacific.

Right now most of the Russian surface forces are deployed up by the Shelekhov Gulf, right near the point where Kamchatka was broken off from the continent. Facing down Siberian forces on the other side, they've actually managed to repel attempts by the Siberians to cross the gulf and invade Kamchatka.

Fortunately for the rest of us, the southern half of Kamchatka is safe and secure, so the Russkies ease up on their security measures. This gives us a little bit of breathing room and space to refuel and resupply en route to Seattle. Heck, a few guys I know even make runs from Petropavlovsk up into the Arctic, smuggling sugar and sweets to the Trans-Polar Aleut.

◉ The military presence is not as suffocating to the south as it is to the north, true. But you still have to be careful, because Russian subs regularly come and go from the sub barns outside town. Fortunately, there's quite a few legit civilian underwater subs in the area, mostly freighters making under-ice runs through the Arctic Ocean to Scandinavia and Québec, as well as a few supply shuttles to offshore oil and geothermal plants. So the Russkies won't automatically shoot at anything their sonar detects. But that's no excuse for a skipper to be careless, or else he'll end up as fish food
◉ Ramius

◉ The Russkies aren't the only ones who have subs operating in the area. The Japanese occasionally send their own attack boats up this way to spy on the Russian sub barns and track the Russian boats as they go in and out. Of course, they're trying as hard as we freetraders not to get discovered, so they usually don't pose much of a threat to us.

Still, you never know. A couple of months ago, a Japanese sub in the Sea of Okhotsk fired on and sank the *Coastal Wizard*, a pirate sub making a smuggling run from Vladivostok to Seattle. The Wizards were involved in a string of raids against Japanese freighters last year, making them the Japanese Public Enemy No. 1. Oh, there was a big international stink-up between Russia and Japan over the incident, but since the whole thing took place in international waters, Japan was fully within its rights.
◉ Icefin

◉ Pirates aren't the only ones the Japanese hunt for in those waters. Several eco-activist crews still do what they can to interfere with Japanese whaling, and they've been ramming and blowing up whaling ships for years. Almost all whalers have IJN escorts now, but of course, the whales fight back now too.
◉ Jungle Cat

Other than that, there's not a lot to recommend about Petropavlovsk-Kamchatskiy. Aside from fishing, there's little industry there to speak of, so there's not a lot of biz going around. The city's also heavily dependent on trade with the outside world to get by, so they can't afford to implement a closed-port policy. The only two things keeping the biz in the city alive are a thriving

software piracy industry and a smuggler-pirate black market bazaar. If you don't feel like making the full run to Seattle, you might be able to unload your goods on someone here, and vice versa. Occasionally some freetraders from Southeast Asia will come up and see what they can get their hands on as well.

• Which makes Petropavlovsk an easy place to get along with. Hey, you're a smuggler, right? Bring along some high-tech wizzer commodities from Vladivostok, Japan, and Korea, and they'll get you a lot more from the local yokels than ordinary nuyen would.
• Carousel

"Nuyen makes the world go 'round."

The Valley of Geysers

While it's not exactly a hotbed of shadow activity, Kamchatka Island is definitely a hotbed of geological activity. Geologists have identified more than two hundred volcanoes on this former peninsula, and more than several dozen of them are active. Numerous earthquakes of varying intensities, such as the one that sundered Kamchatka from the Eurasian mainland in 2012, also rumble throughout the island.

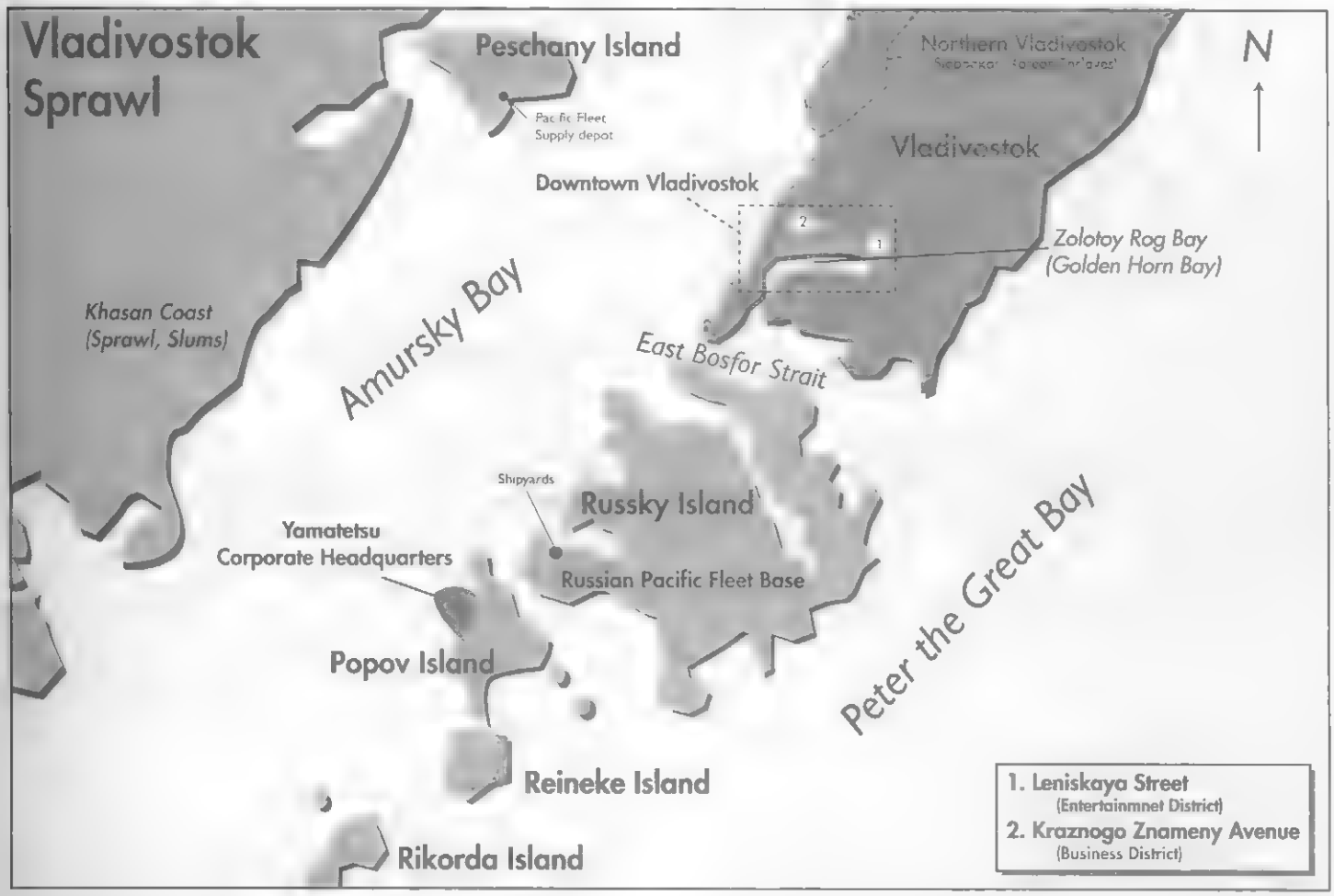
One particularly interesting geological feature is a small ravine some 150 or so kilometers north of Petropavlovsk. Called Dolina Geizerov, or the Valley of Geysers, the canyon bubbles with more than twoo hundred geysers and hot springs, which makes it the second-largest geyser field in the world, next to Yellowstone. Multicolored algae flourish in the warm mineral waters and geyser outflows, decorating the slopes in an outlandish mural. Mud cauldrons, mineral pools and steam vents dot the bottom of the valley, and the Geyser River running through it has been recorded to be as warm as 27 degrees centigrade even in the coldest winter.

Sounds pretty, doesn't it? Well, if you ever manage to make it up that far, don't waste too much time standing around gawking at the sights or skinny-dippin', or you'll end up as firedrake food. Or basilisk bait. Or maybe victim to some free-roaming spirit that's decided to make the Valley its doss.

• I swear the place must be another Russian magical power site. I was up there with a guide, acting on hints of a possible mineral telesma vein in the area. We were ambushed by some sort of bandits or cultists (or maybe both). I called up a firebolt to take out what looked like a magician on the other side, but what I ended up tossing was a huge fragging fireball. Good thing it wasted them, because the drain knocked me unconscious.
• Maier

• I've heard rumors of embracers—those weird gorilla-like things that like fire—near the volcanoes, and I once ran into a salamander fire spirit in the valley. The salamander seemed to be protecting something; it only moved to threaten me when I headed toward one particular field of springs.
• Sinsk

• I've been hearing rumors lately that the Valley of Geysers is the lair of a powerful entity, but what kind of entity it is depends on who you ask. Most of the stories I've heard say it's a free spirit—perhaps a fire elemental or "guardian spirit" of some kind, and quite possibly more than one. However, there's also a minority opinion that thinks the "lord" of the valley (their term, not mine) is a type of dracoform.
• Petrov@p-k.tenset.ru



VLADIVOSTOK NEIGHBORHOODS

by Polecat

The Cap'n shoved this map in my virtual face and said to give up the grit on what's where in Vlad City itself, so let's get down with the dirty on the mean streets of my favorite Russian melting pot.

GOLDEN HORN BAY

Hooking in from the East Bosfor Strait, the Golden Horn Bay (or Zolotoy Rog Bay, as the locals call it) is the central feature of the city of Vladivostok. Surrounded by high hills at the mouth, the bay leads north for a few kilometers and then makes a sharp right turn to the east, making the waterway easily defensible. The Port of Vladivostok sits at the eastern end, while on the southern shores of the bay, residential and administrative buildings rise at terraced intervals along its steep hills.

The Old City and downtown Vladivostok lie on the north banks of Golden Horn Bay. Given the nickname "San Francisco of the East," Vladivostok shares some similar features, with its steep hills and winding streets. Naturally, riggers see the terrain as a challenge to their skills and rep, so watch out for fast-flying cars. The city's main broadway is Leniskaya Street, which runs east to west parallel to the coast of Golden Horn Bay. You'll find most of the entertainment enterprises around here, run by the Vory, plus a few talismonger shops, run by the Triads. Vladivostok's business district lies a kilometer north and several hundred meters uphill, along Kraznogo Znameny Avenue.

RUSSKY ISLAND

Russky Island, the largest island in Amursky Bay, is the nearest to downtown Vladivostok, lying a little more than a kilometer south of the city across the East Bosfor Strait. Russky is the headquarters of the Russian navy, which maintains its shipyards in the inlet mouth on the northwestern banks of the island.

With the loss of many of its bases along the Pacific coast, the large majority of the Pacific Fleet is concentrated around Russky Island. Most of the facilities on Russky Island are dedicated to supporting the command group and operations staff. Supporting operations, such as supply depots and auxiliary maintenance yards, are relegated to nearby areas in the surrounding Amursky Bay area. For example, the Pacific Fleet's primary supply depot is located on Peschany Island, some thirteen kilometers northwest of Vladivostok on the Khasan Coast. It's amazing how often supplies there "mysteriously disappear," only to be found later on Vory smuggler ships.

The eastern shores of Russky Island maintain numerous support docks for the fleet's capital ships, such as the carrier *Piotr*

Veleekly. The western half of the island is mostly undeveloped and serves as barracks and training areas for the Fleet Naval Infantry force.

POPOV ISLAND

Popov Island, sitting south of Russky Island, has long been the residence of Vladivostok's rich and powerful. Back in the bad old days of the Soviet Union, many Party *apparatchiks* warmed their hoops in the *dachas* (country homes) built on the east side of the island. When Vladivostok was opened near the turn of the millennium, newly rich Russian tycoons also built homes on Popov. Soon, Popov Island will be the headquarters of Yamatetsu. Construction crews are already hard at work constructing the main office complex on the western slopes overlooking Amursky Bay. Rumor is the UGB has a main office here, but no one seems to know where. The Vory and Seoulpa bigwigs all live here and are careful to be polite. This island is drawing more spies and intrigue than a coffin hotel draws roaches, so it's a good place to scope for work.

NORTHERN VLADIVOSTOK

The northern districts of Vladivostok hug the lower plains close to the shores of Amursky Bay, which lies to the west. Blue-collar *slobodkas*, these northern districts are home to most of Vladivostok's skilled laborers.

A unique characteristic of Northern Vladivostok is its distinctly Korean atmosphere. During Korea II, thousands of Korean refugees came to Vladivostok to escape the horrors of the war. The vast majority of them settled in the northern slobodkas, which until then were relatively undeveloped. Since then, Northern Vladivostok has transformed into a patchwork of cultural enclaves reflecting several waves of metahuman immigrants. The large majority of the enclaves are still Korean, and a few of them are still communist in organization and structure. The bulk of the underworld distributing and manufacturing operations are in this area.

KHASAN COAST

The Khasan Coast lies on the opposite shore of Amursky Bay, west of the city core. Originally dotted with small fishing villages, Khasan's population swelled in the opening years of the twenty-first century, as rural workers flocked to Vladivostok as its productivity boomed from trade partnerships with foreign ports. However, when the city was closed again, Vladivostok's fortunes plummeted, and Khasan slowly transformed into a lowtown slum, a condition that has unfortunately persisted into the present day. This is the seedy underbelly of the city, and the officials make some efforts to keep it separate and distinct from the rest of the city. If you're looking for some lowlife runners to deal with, or to pick up some "imported" items, this is where you go.

◎ The slums on this coast aren't as bad as you might think. For one thing, many of them are practically vermin-free, thanks mostly to the little domovoi that still stick around despite the urbanization. These little guys love to hunt rats and set traps. They won't live anywhere near cats or dogs, or magically active metahumans, though. The domovoi also keep the homes clean and safe, in exchange for bits of food and milk or beer.
◎ Yarovit@usys.vladnet.ru

◎ There's a bunch of slots who have what I'd call "bee farms" on this coast—they raise swarms of those big Siberian bees. Usually they have a big electromagnet near the hive to keep the bees close and under control. We hired a keeper and swarm once, to help us root out a hidden t-bird concealed with illusion magic that contained some property of mine I wanted back.
◎ The Flying Canadian

LAW ENFORCEMENT

by Petrov

I hate cops (well, at least the ones who refuse my bribes), and I'm a conscription resister to boot (meaning I dodged the military service required of all proper Russian citizens), so I'm not sure why Cap wanted me to write this file. Maybe he was worried the Russians who did their military time got a little too conditioned. Or maybe he figures if I've escaped the UGB this long I must know my enemies well. It pays to keep up on who's calling the shots behind the scenes. So, here's what I, a Russian criminal, can tell you about the various arms of the law, and which factions are flapping them at the moment. Since our country is basically a police state, it makes sense for me to start at the top, no?

NATIONAL SUPREME SOVIET

The Supreme Soviet is the leadership body of Russia, and it currently consists solely of National Soviet Reconstructionists. The NSR's political doctrine is, quite simply, fascist in nature, with some elements of hard-line old-school communism mixed in. They exhibit all the usual fascist elements: rigid authoritarianism, nationalism, jingoism, state capitalism, and scapegoating of minority groups—including Yakutians, Japanese, and the old standby, Jews. While General Secretary Korolenko is the figurehead, his personality cult has weakened over the years, and now the other members of the Supreme Soviet wield increased power. The other members are almost exclusively officials of the police state, including representatives of the UGB, MVD, and the Red Army. Quite a few of these men have agendas and backers of their own, and pursue them discreetly while toeing the party line. What this means for us runners out there is that there's a slew of factions behind Big Brother, and they're all fighting over who gets to pull the puppet strings. And that means biz.

Most of these factions are corporate-backed, of course, and they do what they can to corner certain segments of the Russian economy, or to keep other corps from getting a toehold here. There's a variety of other factions as well, including criminal, religious, and political. Most of these have put a lot of their control efforts into the police-military complex.

◎ Saeder-Krupp and Zeta-ImpChem, two of the strongest corps in Russia, have actually been cooperating to keep other megas out of Russia, especially the Japanese ones. Both MCT and Ares have

made large inroads in recent years, only to be pushed back out. I hear Yamatetsu was allowed to just walk in, however, and Wuxing's having an easy time as well. Anyone scan the deals behind that?
◗ Rube L

◗ Krupp and ZIC weren't the only factions to keep Ares out. The Cross Applied Technologies Seraphim have their hand in the UGB stew and used it against their main rival.
◗ Fallen Angel

◗ It's interesting that metahumans aren't on the Russian scapegoat list. While the Russkies were originally much more tolerant of metahumans and the Awakening, much of that changed following the Siberian revolt, at least among western Russians. There is definitely an antimetahuman faction in the NSR, but something has been keeping it at bay for years now.
◗ AK

The Supreme Soviet does still have a unified agenda, to which the entire police and military apparati are bent. That agenda includes following an isolationist policy until Russia regains her strength, followed by a reemergence of Russia as a world power, including the retaking of Siberia. Foreign troublemakers and resident dissidents are prime targets during this period, as is anything that could cause further instability.

UGB

The UGB, or the *Upravleniye Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (Directorate of State Security), is the latest incarnation of the infamous Russian secret police, known in previous times as the KGB, NKVD, and other assorted acronyms that strike fear into the heart of ordinary Russians. Once the Russians reverted fully to authoritarianism after the Lone Eagle crisis (they never really got away from it, in my view), the various branches of the former KGB, which had been dispersed among half a dozen other state agencies, were brought back together again under the new banner of the UGB. When that regime collapsed following the Euro Wars, the Democratic Recovery Alliance stripped the UGB of several of its departments and made noises about disbanding them again. Instead, the nationalists regained power, and they proceeded to beef up their pet thugs and expand their draconian powers.

◗ Part of the reason the UGB was allowed to survive was because its Border Guards were heavily involved in the fighting with the Siberians. Much as the Democrats wanted to disband the Directorate, doing so would have invited disaster.
◗ Novichok@prm.tenset.ru

Officially, the UGB functions as an intelligence agency, both internal and external, with an additional duty to provide security for critical state functions (such as nukes and government officials). Additionally, the UGB is responsible for patrolling the Russian borders and coasts. To fulfill its security and border patrol duties, the UGB controls the Border Guard, a mechanized semi-military force, whose mission is to prevent unauthorized entrance to or exit from Russia, suppress ethnic/racial dissension, and provide an initial defense force against invaders.

◗ As some of my esteemed colleagues have annotated in the smuggling routes summary, the Border Guards pack some serious hardware that is definitely not to be laughed at. However, one point they glossed over is that the Border Guards' forces are stretched pretty thin, due to the ongoing conflict with the Siberian uprising. Not thinly enough for a smuggler to forget about them, but thin enough to make smuggling in and out of Vladivostok quite profitable
◗ Svidrigailov@pry.tenset.ru

The intelligence gathered by the UGB covers the spectrum. They spy on everybody, from Yakut to megacorps to the MVD to any citizen who subscribes to the wrong newsfax service or watches unapproved trid channels. Their records are kept on matrix systems as glaciered and black as Stalin's heart, and they use a complicated triggered and vanishing trap-door SAN routine that only a Russian bureaucracy could invent (probably defended more by confusion than anything else). They have legal powers that the UCAS feds only dream of getting, and it all comes down to the fact that they can do just about whatever they like to you. Phones and matrix transmissions all through the Russian RTGs are monitored and recorded, and they'd stop Ehran the Scribe himself on the street to search him if they felt like it.

As the biggest power bloc within the Russian hierarchy, the UGB is quite a prize in the political chess game. Currently, the leadership of the UGB is split among three factions, each with a special sponsor. Strongest at the moment is Saeder-Krupp's man Rassily Romanov, who is the UGB's prime director. He is plagued at the moment by separate factions that are pawns of the Zeta Imperial Chemical Company and the Vory v Zakone, respectively. Yet another UGB leadership faction seems to have strictly avoided any megacorporate or other connections, and they primarily stick to the book. Interestingly, this group has managed to consolidate control over the UGB's nuclear security department, which has a few others worried. The Democrats drastically reduced the arsenal during their brief reign, and the megas involved in the current regime seem to have stalled any further production and pushed for reduction of the stockpile—they seem to agree that nuclear war is bad business for everybody. Despite the reduced risk factor, there's been some interesting questions raised lately that most of you probably don't want to hear about.

◗ Tease.
◗ Bung

◗ The rumor that's being left out here is that while almost all the large nuclear warheads in Russia's arsenal have been destroyed or accounted for, apparently a fair number of "suitcase nukes"—yes, small-yield tac nukes that fit into a suitcase—have gone, well, missing. The Russkies had this problem last century when the com-

mies fell from power and the CIS was formed, but when Chelenko took power he kicked some hoop and tracked almost all of them down. Now, several of them seem to have gone "poof" again.
» Novichok@prm.tenset.ru

» Man, talk about bad lost luggage experiences.
» Frequent Flyer

» The new nuclear security "regime" has taken the security part extremely seriously. They no longer keep any systems on the Matrix and don't even trust the net for communications. I've heard some talk of the bigwigs using high-tech, well-armed courier drones for important messages.
» Red Eye

MVD

Perhaps not as well known to the outside world, the *Ministerstvo Vnutrennikh Del*, or the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is as fearsome a state organ as the covert UGB. For while the UGB is Russia's secret police, the MVD is the state's public federal law enforcement agency, no less brutal or ruthless than the UGB.

In a police state like Russia, the excesses and abuses are worse than any of the descriptions I have read in Shadowland about your Lone Star or Knight Errant. The MVD (and the UGB) have a callous disregard for citizens' civil rights and on more than one occasion have seized and imprisoned suspects in violation of established Russian due processes of law. Conversely, the MVD is thoroughly corrupt; despite their ongoing criminal war against the Vory v Zakone, the Russian syndicate has still evaded the MVD due to generous amounts spent paying off officers and investigators.

» Petrov's account is sadly true, but it is also a generalization. Not all MVD investigators are corrupt, and some MVD precincts do operate within the boundaries mandated by Russian legal code. But those are very rare exceptions to the norm.
» Pereplut@usys.vladnet.ru

Unlike its counterparts in the West, the MVD also maintains a standing military force called the *Vnutrennie Voiska*, or the Interior Army. As the name implies, the Interior Army is responsible for fighting internal antistate activities, and also for guarding a wide variety of public installations, primarily major food storage areas and electrical power stations. Right now the Interior Army is heavily involved in the fighting against Yakut.

» Typical Russian thinking. Even their armies are redundant.
» Jaxon

» To an outsider, the Russian military may look odd and irrational, but it makes perfect sense to the Russian way of thinking. The Interior Army (and, to a degree, the UGB Border Guards) serve as a counterbalance to the Red Army. Also, Interior Army forces perform a lot of duties that the Red Army finds distasteful, such as suppressing riots and guarding the prisons and gulags (which still exist, no matter how much Moscow denies it). Such sensitivity to public

opinion seems odd, but the Red Army finds it far easier to operate when the public accepts and even admires the military. Maybe the fact that all Russians are required to perform a stint of military service has something to do with it. To maintain its popularity with the people, the Red Army often shunts off the more distasteful duties of the state to the Interior Army (which seemingly enjoys its public reputation for cruel intimidation).
◗ Glenngarry

◗ On the other hand, there's a lot of interservice rivalry between the Interior Army, the Red Army, and the UGB Border Guards. They must compete with one another for scarce budget rubles, and citizens automatically go into Red Army service for their mandatory period unless they specifically request one of the others, meaning they compete for recruits (especially children of NSR officials). Also, the military forces are sometimes used as political pawns in the ongoing three-way political struggle in Moscow among the government factions
◗ Droud

◗ This political power struggle is something smugglers should keep in mind. Along the Siberian front, there are often jurisdictional struggles between the UGB Border Guards and the Interior Army. On many occasions, the UGB Border Guards are too busy outmaneuvering the Interior Army to catch smugglers, and occasionally the Interior Army finds itself fighting the Border Guards more than the Siberians.
◗ Muramets@apcb.suz.ru

So who's pulling the MVD's strings, you ask? That's easy enough. The most influential backer is undoubtedly—get this—the Eastern Orthodox Church. That's right, the hard-core zealots never seem to die off, and they've got their claws wrapped around the chief MVD officers. A few other factions valiantly do battle here, but the only group worth mentioning is sort of hard to peg. As far as I can tell, they'd be Humanis members if the policlub had any roots here and it were subtler, so I guess I'll call them racially motivated independents.

◗ Sounds like the Human Nation to me.
◗ Stainless

THE PACIFIC FLEET

Because of its strategic location on the Sea of Japan, Vladivostok is the nucleus of Russia's naval operations on the Pacific Ocean. With the close proximity of the aggressive Imperial Japanese Navy, Russia finds it critically important to keep its SLOCs (sea lanes of communication) open to trading ports on the Pacific Rim.

◗ The Pacific Fleet packs a lot of heavy firepower, which is worrisome, but it isn't as much of a threat as UGB coastal patrols or the IJN. The Pacific Fleet is more concerned with Japanese warships, and it sees smugglers as a UGB problem. The Pacific Fleet generally doesn't get involved, unless the smuggler makes the mistake of running into a fleet exercise or a patrolling surface action group.
◗ Sadko@usys.vladnet.ru

◗ Maybe to a surface smuggler, but I wouldn't make that assumption for smugglers running by sub. The Russians are positively paranoid about Japanese sub activities, and they could easily "mistake" a smuggler for an IJN attack sub. If they determine a sub is not one of theirs, the Russkies will automatically assume it's Japanese and will shoot. Fortunately, Russian ASW isn't worth a damn.
◗ October Red

◗ Same with their airspace coverage. The Russians are notoriously twitchy about unauthorized flights in their airspace, and they've got a much tighter clamp on the media than other countries if they should "accidentally" shoot down a bogey. Their radar and sat tracking nets have been steadily declining in relation to the SOTA since last century, but they're still nothing to laugh at. Air superiority is the one edge they've got over the Siberians, and they're not about to slack on it (not that it does them much good there).
◗ The Flying Canadian

The military is, of course, tightly controlled by the National Supreme Soviet, but quite a few of the generals and admirals listen to more than NSR dogma. Saeder-Krupp has some leverage here, as does Korea's Eastern Tiger corp, and even the mercenary group MET 2000.

Naval Infantry

One important component of the Pacific Fleet is the Fleet Naval Infantry Force, a ground combat force similar in mission and structure to the Marines of the UCAS, CAS, Imperial Japan or Great Britain. The naval infantry is the spearhead of Russian amphibious warfare operations, and it is also trained to conduct raiding missions on enemy seaports.

The Pacific Fleet commands a division-sized naval infantry task force of about ten thousand soldiers. Like most Marine forces of other countries, the naval infantry receives better training than their normal army counterparts, and many marines are trained and qualified in airborne and air assault missions.

Unlike its foreign counterparts, the naval infantry is a heavily mechanized force and makes great use of medium tanks, amphibious wheeled armored personnel carriers, hovercraft, and helicopters. Unlike the Marine Corps of the UCAS and CAS, the naval infantry has no air assets, except for a few attack helicopters, and relies on the fleet to provide supporting air cover.

◗ The Pacific Fleet also reportedly has a brigade of special operations forces, composed of combat swimmers, an airborne assault force, a minisubmarine infiltration force, and specialized troops. The fleet uses these SpecOps troops for covert naval operations, such as harbor raids and beach scouting. Allegedly they have a covert training island somewhere within the Amursky or Peter the Great Bays.
◗ Hangfire

THE VLADIVOSTOK UNDERWORLD

by Kosak

It can't be a big city without organized crime, and Vladivostok has plenty of that. Since the Soviet Union dis-united some seventy-odd years ago, the Vory v Zakone (the Russian mob) has run rampant in the Vladivostok underworld. With the opening of Vladivostok to the outside world, other syndicates, such as the Seoulpa Rings and the Triads, have been trying to worm their way into the scene. Here's a run-down of the major players in Vladivostok's underworld.

• Probably the only major world syndicate that doesn't have a presence in Vladivostok is the Mafia. Their operations have never been strong outside North America and Europe, and even Europe is questionable now, as the Vory have the upper hand in Eastern Europe and are making strong inroads into Central Europe. While the Mafia would more than love to strike the Vory in their rear, setting up and sustaining a Family on the Pacific Rim is more than they can handle.
• Prinz Cortio@arbnetz.ffm.de

VORY V ZAKONE

Saying that the Vory v Zakone dominate the Vladivostok underworld is like saying the Mafia is an association of Sicilian businessmen. No matter what the operation, whether it's chips, gambling, prostitution, extortion, or whatever, the Vory usually hold the upper hand in the trade.

• It wasn't always that way. Back in 2046, the Vladivostok Vory almost wiped themselves out during a bitter civil war, when tzar Viktor Artrovskiy, in a bid to become the top tzar of Vladivostok, assassinated tzar Aleksandr Putorin. During the two years of internecine fighting, the Triads gained their foothold in the Vladivostok underworld, and the Seoulpas were poised to take the spot as the dominant syndicate.
• Zmei@prm.tenset.ru

Although there are several dozen different Vory syndicates in Vladivostok, most of them answer in one way or another to one or more of the top three factions: the Byelmodin faction, the Kovalenka faction, or the Yunggart faction.

The Byelmodin Faction

Led by Sergei Byelmodin, the Byelmodin faction is the most powerful of the Vory factions in Vladivostok. Byelmodin, 62, arrived in Vladivostok from Moscow in 2048 to reunite the Vory after a bitter internal struggle. Since taking charge as the senior tzar, he has turned the fortunes of the Vory around and reasserted their position as the rulers of the Vladivostok underworld.

Until recently, Byelmodin's main goal was to reclaim lost territory and markets that had been seized by the Seoulpa Rings and the Triads during the Vory mob war from 2046 to 2048. But with the Yakuza's revival of interest in Vladivostok, he has called a tentative truce with the Rings and the Triads, so that all of them can focus on stopping this potentially very dangerous newcomer.

The Kovalenka Faction

Otsana Kovalenka is the only tzarina in the Vory, and she is also the youngest (at age 36) of her peers. The daughter of a Russian naval officer killed fighting the Siberians, Otsana rose quickly through the ranks as a hatchet woman for Sergei Byelmodin. She became tzarina when her predecessor, Vasily Korodov, was killed in a Triad ambush three years ago.

Two of Kovalenka's distinct traits are her vocal, firebrand commitment to mother Russia and her near-xenophobic distrust of foreigners, particularly Asians. During tzar Byelmodin's campaign to retake ground from the Rings and Triads, she earned the nickname of "Bloody Otsana" for her vicious wetwork operations against Ring and Triad leaders. She has survived five assassination attempts by the Rings, three of them occurring after she became tzarina in 2056.

The Yunggart Faction

Burugar Yunggart is the only non-Muscovite tzar. Yunggart is an Udege, one of the indigenous Ussuri tribes that live in the Russian Far East. The third most powerful Vory faction, the Yunggarts engage heavily in smuggling operations into Siberia. The Yunggarts profit from both ends of the runs, selling bootleg weapons to the Siberians, while bringing rare Siberian telesma into the Vladivostok black market.

• Yunggart gunrunning to the Siberians earns them the deep enmity of the fiercely nationalistic Otsana Kovalenka, who denounces them for "betraying the Rodina." However, the Yunggarts generate some serious nuyen from their smuggling runs, so they have the unwavering support of Sergei Byelmodin, and that is all that matters. Bloody Otsana may complain long and loudly, but as long as Sergei says "nyet" to her, that is all she can do.
• Tangara@prm.tenset.ru

• Maybe not directly, but I've heard rumors that Kovalenka may be secretly sabotaging the Yunggart runs. Acting on anonymous tips, both the UGB Border Guards and the MVD Interior Army have been bagging more smugglers with ties to the Yunggart faction. Burugar accused Kovalenka of sabotaging his operations, but she just shrugged and denied doing such a thing, and countered with a suggestion that Burugar may not be in full control of his faction.
• Bogatyr@aspw.zsu.ru

SEOULPA RINGS

A distant step behind the Vory, the Seoulpas are the second most powerful syndicate in Vladivostok. The Rings made their start in Vladivostok during the opening years of the twenty-first century, when Korean refugees were arriving in Amursky Bay, fleeing from the war on the Korean peninsula. For most of their existence in Vladivostok, they kept a low profile, active only in the northern *slobodkas* where the majority of Koreans lived. But when the Vory split apart in 2046, the Rings saw their opportunities for advancement and successfully made inroads farther south.

The Seoulpas focus primarily on "high-tech" crimes, such as computer hacking, BTLs, credit fraud, and the like. The Vory aren't as technologically proficient in such areas, and so they have been unable to oust the Koreans from their control of these markets. The Seoulpas are also starting to move in on some tech ground where the Vory are unstable: black information. The Vory have been dabbling in this area for awhile, and their connections with the UGB and the nationalist government (giving them access to government records) have proved very useful in this market. The Seoulpas, however, are much better at finding and managing the data. There are even rumors that one of the Vladivostok Rings has cut a deal to transfer the remnants of the Beppu Data Haven here and restart it. If that's true, a shadow war could erupt over the control of black info.

• No wonder I couldn't find Beppu, what happened to it? I know it was never a very stable data haven to begin with.
• Twang

• Well, after crashing every few days for about two years, the sysops finally got it stable and secure. Less than a week later, a corp strike team hit their physical site in Beppu, Japan, and left a smoking crater. They were just a little too close to home for the Japanese megas, I'd guess. In my opinion, Beppu was never as reliable as the Denver Nexus, Singapore, or the Hague.
• Fastjack

• Rumor says it was a joint strike force composed of grunts from several megas. The alleged reason for the hit is that the main sysop was a dwarf, and connected to a Terra First! crew.
• 'Trixster

• Whoever it was, they didn't pull a thorough job. Over half of the mainframes, servers, and storage units survived. I hear they're currently being hauled around on a fraggin' boat until the sysops find somewhere safe to link up.
• Kobo

◉ Except for the highly lucrative BTL market, the Vory have little interest in high-tech crime. Part of the reason the Rings survive is that they fill what the Vory consider a niche market.
◉ Zmei@prm.tenset.ru

The Seoulpas are also well-connected with a scattering of pirate crews in the region, most of them Korean. These rascals make a habit of raiding Japanese merchants, but that doesn't mean they'll skip another target if the haul looks keen. They've pegged a lot of the smuggler routes and have arranged for some interesting snares and "interdictions" to relieve such freetraders of their burdens.

THE TRIADS

The third most powerful syndicate in Vladivostok (or the second weakest, depending on your perspective), the Triads established a foothold during the Vory mob war between 2046 and 2048. The Triads operate mostly in the residential and commercial districts on the southwest shores of the Golden Horn Bay and around the districts bordering the East Bosfor Strait.

Although they have their fingers in various criminal markets, Triad activity is very weak compared with the Vory or the Rings, except in one area: fencing, particularly of magical goods. Their expertise in magic often gives them the upper hand in appraising the value of magical wares. Consequently, the Triads assume a unique role of middlemen between land smugglers bringing in telesma from Siberia and Manchuria, and sea smugglers taking those magical goods to Seattle, Japan, or other smuggler havens. Since they have a virtual lock on the black market of magical goods, the Triads have sought to extend their dominance into other, more "mundane," contraband, like weapons from North America, or high-tech electronics from Japan.

◉ The Triads' leadership in the fencing market often leads them into clashes with Izar Yunggart's Vory faction, who run several of the inland smugglers and would more than love to cut out (quite literally) the cost of dealing with a middleman.
◉ Peri Stroika

THE YAKUZA

Surprisingly, or perhaps not so, the Yakuza is the weakest organization in Vladivostok. The reluctance of the Japanacorps to invest in the Russian Far East translated into few Japanese coming into Vladivostok to do business—perhaps the Japanese view of Vladivostok as a festering pit of metahuman scum has something to do with it. This meant, however, that the Yakuza never really had a chance to play here, either. Now that Vladivostok is back in the spotlight, the Yakuza have been making a belated effort to establish some sort of toehold, but the Vory, the Triads, and the Seoulpa Rings have been successful in keeping them out. In fact, there have been some rumors that the Vory have been keeping the MVD informed on Yakuza ops and operators, in a continuing effort to keep the yaks out of Vladivostok.

◉ Actually, the yaks have been trying to get into Vladivostok for well over a year now. They knew the smuggling scene was pretty hot, and they just dragged their feet about moving in. Now that they've found the Vory and Seoulpas entrenched, and the Yamatetsu spotlight blazing everywhere, they're probably starting to rethink it, but they would lose face if they backed off so soon.
◉ Zmei@prm.tenset.ru

◉ I don't think the Vory are really the Yakuza's biggest worry in Vladivostok. The Seoulpa Rings are the second most powerful mob in the city (a distant second, true, but still second), and they hate the Yakuza with a passion. According to sources I have in the police, the Rings are responsible for four out of every five Yakuza soldiers killed in Vladivostok. And the rumor on the street is that the Seoulpas have volunteered their services to the Vory in offing any Yakuza who show their tattoos in the city.
◉ Chiun@wots.xna.ko

◉ Actually, the Yakuza did try to establish a foothold in Vladivostok early in the century, when Vladivostok first opened in the 1990s and the West was eager to penetrate the Russian market. But when the city closed off again in 2009, the Vory took advantage of the situation to wipe out the few Yakuza gumis in Vladivostok. No doubt the yaks are itching for payback, which probably explains their recent strong push to break into Vladivostok, despite the fact that everyone—the Vory, the MVD, the Rings, the Triads—is against them.
◉ Novichok@prm.tenset.ru

◉ There is a Yakuza clan that has managed to set up shop and survive in Vladivostok. They call themselves the kawaru-gumi, and the kicker is that many of them are Japanese metahumans who've fled from Japan. Some of these were the sons or daughters of Yakuza members. When these yak offspring underwent goblinization during adolescence (or later), they left Japan, rather than be forced to "relocate" to Yomi. However, the large majority of this group's members are resident metahumans, both Japanese and non-Japanese, who were recruited by the changed yaks.

The kawaru-gumi operate mostly in the lowtown slums on the Khasan coast, though some of them are active on the western fringes of Vladivostok, and some in the northern areas too. Often, residents in that area go to the kawaru-gumi to provide basic municipal services, rather than wait for the bloated and unresponsive Russian bureaucracy. Other than the fact that they're all metas, the kawaru-gumi still maintain all the traditions of the Yakuza, such as finger-cutting, tattoos, and the like.

The kawaru-gumi maintain a very low profile and aren't much bigger than a gang, so the other syndicates generally ignore them as a nonthreat. And, like the other syndicates, the kawaru-gumi have fought to keep the Japanese Yakuza out of Vladivostok—they've made it clear that they're not connected to traditional yaks in any way. On the other hand, the way I see it, the kawaru-gumi know all too well why they've been allowed to survive for so long and will do nothing to provoke the Vory.
◉ Tomashi@voks.zp.ru

OFF THE DEEP END

◗ It never rains, but it pours. No sooner did Shadowland post the compilation about piracy, less than half a year ago, than we started receiving megapulses of news and paydata about major events taking place all over the world's oceans. Hope you slackers studied up, cuz here's a pop quiz.

Quiz time: Which dragon died two years ago and left five million nuyen for the development of underwater cities? If you didn't say Dunkelzahn, saunter over to the big black hammer icon and say "Hit me!"—no sense in not putting yourself out of your misery if you're that clueless. Yes, two years after shuffling off this mortal coil, Dunkelzahn still continues to make the headlines, this time with recent revelations that at least two corporations have been aggressively building underwater aquacologies in search of the big payoff.

Out in the east, it's been revealed that Yamatetsu owns and operates a number of small undersea projects. They were in the midst of consolidating all their little projects together into one big aquacology for the grand booby prize, when suddenly their board of directors started waving the banner for metahumanity and decided to move their HQ out of Japan and into Russia, lock, stock, and barrel (see the MegaWatch SIG for details). Now Yamatetsu's big aquacology plans are on indefinite hold while they sort out this mess, and it's safe to bet their Japanacorp competitors will be muscling in on their underwater holdings.

Half a world away, a no-name third-tier corporation by the name of Proteus AG made a very big splash (no pun intended) by filing a claim with the Draco Foundation for the five million nuyen prize. The foundation eventually rejected the claim due to technicalities, but everyone in Europe is talking about how this dark horse got this far without anybody paying attention. (A big *danke schön* to our chummers on the other side for bringing this to our attention.)

If you haven't noticed it by now, there's a general theme that runs through these scenarios on opposite sides of the globe: underwater cities, bases, and operations. So check your oxygen tanks and batten down the hatches, maties: it's time to take a dive off the deep end.

◗ Captain Chaos

Transmitted on 01 July 2059, at 20:28:35 (EST)

THE SEA OF JAPAN—TURN OF THE TIDES

by Soju

Well, it looks like all those Huks who posted in the **Cyberpirates** upload have gotten their wish. A maelstrom has hit the corporate waters in Southeast Asia, the Japanacorps have taken to fighting amongst themselves, and they've even dragged in some other parties. Hopefully them Huks will use the opportunity to take care of some biz, as we are. Y'see, the situation in our seas is more volatile than it's ever been before—cheers to everyone who helped start it, our scores have never been better!

For you slags who aren't in our hemisphere, here's what's going down. As you may know, quite recently there was a changing of the guard at Yamatetsu. The former chairman of the board, Tadamako Shibanokuji, bowed out, thanks to complications from a nasty major stroke. His son Yuri is in. And here's the kicker—Yuri is not only *gaijin* (half-Russian on his mother's side), but he's also an ork! (I guess all that hype about Yamatetsu being meta-friendly wasn't PR flak after all.) Anyway, that wasn't sitting well with the Emperor and his lackeys, so the paper-pushers at the Ministry of Trade started choking Yamatetsu with red tape. Yuri's a smart ork, like me, and saw the writing on the wall. So he teamed up with Buttercup, grabbed the corporate reins, and galloped that beast straight outta Tokyo. The Big Y is setting up shop in Vladivostok now, but the PacRim's a small hallway, and the Japanacorps all have big shoulders. It wasn't long before brawls broke out.

◗ Mostly it's been Shiawase and Mitsuhama doing the dumping on Yamatetsu. Fuchi and Renraku are too caught up in each other's problems to do anything to Yamatetsu at the moment.
◗ Larkspur

So what does that mean to me and my mates on this side of the Pacific? Well, it turns out Yamatetsu has major holdings in underwater operations: undersea labs, fish farms, and all that. Just before the sudden power shift, Yamatetsu was working on consolidating its ops to claim the five million nuyen prize offered in the wizworm's will for setting up an underwater city. Ironically, so were some of Yamatetsu's bosom buddies, such as Shiawase and Mitsuhama. But with Yamatetsu's decision to leave Japan, monkey wrenches have been thrown into everybody's plans. Six months ago the corps in the Sea of Japan were busy as beavers, but now they're like megas all over the world—megalodons in a feeding frenzy with everyone bleeding.

CORPORATE SCORECARD

The Japanacorps have been making use of underwater bases for several years already. You've probably never heard of 'em, though; they're pretty small affairs. Most of these underwater facilities are staffed by anywhere from twenty-five to sixty people, most of them only there for six-month rotations. None of the bases are really self-sustaining, so they do require supply runs for food, supplies, and (in some cases) energy to stay running. The supply ships make good targets, if you ever happen to get a schedule for one—usually these bases are super hush-hush.

◗ That last bit about supplies is important, because none of the Japanacorps can claim their facilities as meeting the condition for a self-sustaining community, as laid down in Dunkelzahn's will.
◗ Pentecost

Some corps are only minor players in the underwater scene. Mitsuhama has only a few underwater bases in the Sea of Japan, although they have a large number of offshore factories set up on artificial platforms, mostly for manufacturing or chemical processing. Renraku has several underwater facilities in the Sea of Japan, but I couldn't tell you what they are actually *for*. Here's a rundown of the big corp fish under the Sea of Japan, as far as we've been able to scan. Mind you, we run one of the best privateer subs in these waters, and all of our intel contacts are hot and reliable.

Yamatetsu

Yamatetsu's underwater interests in the Sea of Japan include marine biological research stations and underwater farms raising fish, krill, shellfish, seaweed, and a bunch of other marine-based food drek. Most of these products go to Japanese food processing stations, which in turn sell these products in the Japanese market. Of course, with Yamatetsu's recent changes, you can bet this really slots the Japanese off. They're stuck in a hard spot, though, cuz they've got a bit of an overpopulation problem that's depending on Yamatetsu to supply their sushi. The Imperials went ahead and placed sanctions on Yamatetsu, but the corp just turned around and charged more, resulting in raised food prices and even a few food shortages.

◗ Which gives bad face to the Japanese. The Japanese have this irrational notion about agricultural self-sufficiency, never mind the fact that they've got twice the population of the UCAS and nowhere near as much farmland. After all, this is the country that bans private rice imports, even if it means the government has to pay three times the world market price.
◗ Gorai@asem.tams.md.jp

◗ Yamatetsu often combines its marine biological research with its underwater farms. Not only does this make some practical sense, but it also gives Yamatetsu a PR tool against other corps. If the corps attempt a black-op against Yamatetsu underwater research, the company can then spin-doctor it to make it look like the rival corp was attempting to sabotage its fish farms, and thus "endanger the welfare of the Japanese people." Very bad face.
◗ Metsuke

◗ Yamatetsu, like the other corps that run underwater farms, also occasionally draws some fire from environmentalist weirdos. Every once in a while, animal-rights freaks try to sabotage the aqua-farms to "liberate" the fish. Last year, a group of TerraFirst! eco-terrorists scattered water-soluble capsules full of mercury into a Renraku fish farm. Not only did it kill off all the fish for that harvest, but it also contaminated the region so badly that Renraku was forced to shut down the fish farm. Renraku marine biologists esti-

mate that it'll be at least another four years before the area will be habitable again.
◗ Black Salmon

◗ Talk about spin-doctoring. That mercury splash was a Shiawase op. They framed TerraFirst! for it because the ecoteurs blew open the story on their secret toxic dumping in deep-sea trenches.
◗ No Compromise

◗ Before Yamatetsu moved, the Japanese Ministry of Trade was hitting them with heavy fines for causing environmental damage in several locations. No matter how meta-friendly it is, even Yamatetsu is going to take short cuts on waste disposal and environmental regulations when it can, and if it's not careful, it may continue to pay through the nose for it.
◗ Sierra Scout

Just before Yuri set his hoop down on the board, Yamatetsu had been consolidating its undersea efforts under one facility in the Sea of Japan. Called the Saotome AquaDomes, it would ultimately contain a self-sustaining community of about two hundred people, sufficient for meeting both requirements for the dragon's five million nuyen prize. On hold now, the project is over a third completed and has a small personnel contingent on site. Get this, though—Yamatetsu may be letting some other corps in on the project. We heard of a crew that netted themselves some booty from a Wuxing freighter in the area, and it was carrying *supplies* for the AquaDomes, as well as personnel. Perhaps Yamatetsu's thinking of selling it and moving on, or perhaps there's more going on with Wuxing and Yamatetsu than we know.

◗ I know for a fact that one member of an "inspection team" Wuxing sent down there was a geomancer, and she had written orders to evaluate the site's feng shui, make suggestions to Yamatetsu regarding architecture, and scope out local geothermal sources and their mystical potential. Weird drek.
◗ Woo

Shiawase

Shiawase is the main provider of electrical juice to the Japanese islands, and it maintains several offshore power plants to supplement its power grid. Shiawase's undersea plants utilize renewable energy sources, drawing on wave motion power and tectonic geothermal power to generate electricity. For example, Shiawase's got a chain of underwater stations along the southwest coast of Honshu Island that harness thermal energy from moving tectonic plates. The corp also operates a line of wave motion generators across the Tsugaru Strait and several offshore oil and gas wells along the northern half of Honshu Island.

◗ Many environmentalists complain that Shiawase underutilizes its offshore power plants and prefers to rely on nuclear fusion reactors as the primary supplier of the Japanese power grid. A fact that they conveniently forget is that if Shiawase relied solely on its geothermal and wave motion generators, it couldn't provide 58 even a fifth of the electrical power demanded by Japan.
◗ Ryan

◗ Or maybe the Japanese need to practice conservation more. And FYI, having those fusion reactors around isn't just annoying to environmentalists, it's also tempting to certain fringe cults and toxic shamans.
◗ Aware

◗ About a month ago, a Shiawase underwater geothermal plant near Nagato went off-line during peak usage hours, resulting in a large number of brownouts. Shiawase initially came under some heavy heat for the incident, but it was revealed about a week later that the station came under attack from a band of pirates in a minisub armed with minitorpedoes. However, what was not mentioned was that Shiawase investigators suspected that the pirates were paid off by Yamatetsu to make the raid against the power plant at peak hours, so as to make Shiawase look bad.
◗ Metsuke

◗ You've got only about half the story, Met. A contact of mine told me that Shiawase ordered that hit against itself, using one of its own people to pose as the Yamatetsu rep. Shiawase had originally planned to reveal the "smoking gun" later, thus making Yamatetsu look bad for making a "barbarous, profit-motivated" attack against an environmentally safe power supply.

Unfortunately for Shiawase, it blew up in their faces (so to speak) when Yamatetsu quickly unmasked the impostor soon after the attack. With their little publicity stunt foiled and taking heat from having a power plant go down, Shiawase was forced to settle with a story about "rogue pirates from nearby hostile states."
◗ Toshiro

◗ Yeah, sure. And who is your contact, Toshiro? Yamatetsu PR?
◗ Sauvix

◗ The reserves in the oil and gas wells aren't very rich (otherwise the Japanese navy wouldn't be as active as it is right now). Quite a few rigs have been built that were abandoned not much later when the reserves dried up prematurely.

What this means to the shadows is that these abandoned rigs also provide an offshore base of operations for pirates to run from. One infamous Korean gang, the Park Dyun Woo, used an abandoned rig near the coast of Hokkaido to make raids against coastal factories. The disadvantage, of course, is that an abandoned rig also makes a big target—as the Park Dyun Woo found out the hard way when the Imperial Japanese Navy finally discovered them six months later.
◗ Attila the Hyun

◗ Some crews don't use them for bases, but they do use them to store goods. They usually leave some nasty guard critters and surprises behind too.
◗ Scavenger

◗ No drek, do they mark the spot on their GPS screen with a big "X"?
◗ Bung

◗ There's a new smuggler stop set up on an abandoned rig smack between Vladivostok and Hokkaido. It looks like an independent dock-garage, with a good set of mechanics on board, but it's really a Yakuza operation. Maybe it's a transparent attempt to work their way into the smugglers' trust, or maybe they have other motives. I know the Vory will be checking it out.

Oh yeah, did I mention that the rig they grabbed seems to have some sort of infestation problem? A pilot I chatted with says they have some kind of problem with a tribe of dours or troglodytes or something who were in residence when the yaks moved in, and haven't been all killed yet.
◗ Kim

◗ Yaks my hoop. That's an IJN sting op.
◗ Li Choi Fat

◗ Word is that the surviving sysops from the Beppu Data Haven managed to escape with a good number of data storage units after the corp strike team hit and they're installing themselves on an abandoned rig. They've got power on-line, and are even hoping to get some fiber-optic cable laid on the ocean floor so they can have a direct Matrix feed. They must be pulling some long strings to get that by.
◗ Net Trawler

PORTS OF CALL

You know the score: the Japanacorps would never, ever do something so dishonorable as attacking another corp's underwater base. Oh, no. Especially not so close to the mother islands. So who do they turn to when they want the dirty work done? Yup, pirates and runners like you and me, chummer.

A few shadowrunners operate out of the Japanese islands, but with that rigid, stratified society and their neurotic suspicion of foreigners, it's definitely not one of the best places to stage a shadow op from. There's a fair bit of runner types up near Vladivostok, but being around so many metahumans tends to make the Japanese suits twitchy. Ironically, the Japanacorps end up doing most of their shadowrun recruiting from those they view as "inferiors": Koreans and Chinese. It makes sense from their point of view. Corps hire shadowrunners because if they get caught, the blame gets pinned on the runners, right? Well, if they catch Korean pirates or Chinese runners on a job, then the Japanese can blame it on the Korean or Chinese scum, and not any honorable Japanese. And that's the ultimate in plausible deniability.

Of course, the Koreans and Chinese know they're being used, and they know that their Johnson usually has no qualms about

completely screwing them to the seafloor. So on occasion they'll bail in the middle of a run, or sell the info they get to the highest bidder, or generally do whatever they can to make Johnson's life miserable and still make some cred. Or they do the run and make a different Japanese guy's life hell, but they do the run their way, and frag the torpedoes. This has made shadow ops in the Sea of Japanese a bit of a chaotic working environment, but it sure beats chillin' in some "flash" Seattle club, trolling for work. Of course, the chaos has turned more than one Johnson toward shadow scenes abroad, so be careful who you talk to in that club.

Pusan

Smack on the southeast corner of the Korean peninsula, Pusan is Korea's biggest port city, making it the number two industrial and commercial center, behind Seoul. Many Korean companies, including a few second- and third-tier corporations, have their headquarters here in Pusan. Also, because Pusan is less than two hundred kilometers from the main Japanese islands, it's a concentration center for Korean naval and air force assets.

For these two reasons, not many Korean pirates call Pusan their home port. On the other hand, Korean pirates make their bases along the many small islands dotting the southern coastline near Pusan, such as Koje, Toisan and Kumo. A few pirates even make landfall on the island of Cheju, some 150 klicks southwest of Korea. From Cheju, they make raids in the East China Sea against Chinese and Japanese ships, many of which sail from ports in Shanghai, Nagasaki, Taipei, and Okinawa. A lot of pirates make treks into the harbor every so often, usually to meet with a corp Johnson or fixer.

Eastern Tiger, Korea's largest corporation, is based in Pusan—and it has an underwater project near Cheju Island. Several fixers in Pusan with "unofficial" ties to Eastern Tiger have an open reward policy for information or agricultural or biological samples retrieved from aquasphere research projects. I know several crews that have profited from this when their primary deals fell through.

It's not uncommon to see an Imperial Japanese Navy ship in port here. That's the Emperor's way of reminding the Korean President-General of how he got where he is and who's the big kid on the block. There's a fair bit of anti-Japanese resentment among the general populace, though. They remember what Japan has done in the past, and what it might do now.

◗ Korean pirates are a pretty patriotic bunch and don't attack Korean ships, preferring to target Japanese and Chinese ships. Part of it stems from the historical enmity between the Japanese and Koreans, but another important factor is that opportunities in that area are so plentiful, the Korean pirates can afford to pick and choose.
◗ Yongmang@pu.pakchung.ko

◗ On the other hand, there are some Japanese pirates who also operate nearby, and they often target Korean and other non-Japanese ships in the area. Most of these Japanese pirates operate from the small Japanese-claimed islands in the area; the prime favorite is Tsushima, which sits perfectly in the middle of the Korea Strait, halfway between Pusan and the Japanese city of Fukuoka. Another favored hide-out is the smaller island of Iki, which is less than fifty kilometers away from the main Japanese island of Kyushu.

Inevitably, Japanese pirates draw the attention of the Korean navy and, not surprisingly, the Korean pirates. More often than not, it is the Korean pirates who attack the Japanese pirates, not the Korean authorities. Some have speculated that they have an unspoken arrangement with the Korean navy, which directs the pirates to the Nippon pirates, based on intelligence and mayday calls, and then hold back to mop up the few that get away

The pirates like this arrangement, because they get to keep anything they grab from the Japanese (even if it was originally plundered from a Korean ship). The navy likes this too, because the pirates do the dirty work for them, and they conveniently avoid international difficulties, since the Korean authorities are not overtly involved.
◗ Blowfish

◗ A lot of Korean pirates operating around Pusan and the southern coast have strong ties to the Korean Seoulpa Rings. Some of the pirate gangs are actually Rings themselves, such as the Kohung Ring and the Saegu Ring.

The Saegu Ring is drek hot, and getting hotter under the direction of a troll named Paksong. He's got easily 145 Koreans under his wing, if not double that. He's got his horns mixed in criminal projects all over the Sea of Japan, mostly because he's such a shrewd negotiator. The Saegu Ring has at least four pirate-smuggling vessels running, and like most Rings, the Saegu don't cut corners with 'ware or wizzes. In fact, the Saegu are known for their particularly skillful use of drones in raids, and their deckers practically run the Pusan LTG.
◗ Yang

Wonsan

This port city sitting on the edge of Yonghung Bay hasn't fared very well since the two Koreas were forcibly reunited at the beginning of the century. After the dust from Korea II settled, half the city once valued by the North for its oil refineries and heavy industries lay in rubble. While several South Korean companies moved in to take control of the surviving companies, they found it very difficult to deal with the resident workforce, which had grown used to the communists' way of pretending to do business—they were thoroughly unprepared for the rigors of capitalist industrialism. Within ten years, most of the industries that had started in Wonsan after unification had collapsed or moved away.

◗ Even some fifty years after the war, there are still quarters of Wonsan that haven't been reconstructed. Here, burned-out half shells of buildings still stand, and the streets remain strewn with rubble and craters from artillery shells. It's a squatter filth-pit, where the lowest of the low end up, and a war zone in more ways than one.
◗ Byeong-suk@wo.sunpak.ko

◗ Quite a few women make their living in this city through the oldest profession, if you get my drift. However, if you're Japanese, I'd stay away from the brothels. There's some lingering hostility from the way Korean women were treated when Japan occupied the country last century, and Japanese men have a habit of disappearing when they're out on the town.
◗ Scissor Girl

With conditions as miserable as they are, it's no surprise that Wonsan is the capital of the Korean underworld. The Rings, not the government, are the real authority in Wonsan. Additionally, some of the largest and most vicious Korean pirate gangs, such as the Kimchi Fleet and the Red Sun Gang, call the port of Wonsan their home. These fraggers are as dangerous as pirates come, and you'd be amazed how many slags they can pile onboard a ship.

◗ The black market here acts like a black hole, sucking in everything from all over Asia: Siberian critter parts, Manchurian telesma, Japanese miltech, Philippine biotech, Malaysian cyberdecks, Korean paydata, and even Tibetan prayer fans. You could find anything, if you didn't mind killing the mandatory half dozen goons who try to rob you in the process. It's outta control.
◗ Scavenger

◗ Wonsan pirates aren't as patriotic as those out of Pusan and will attack Korean ships with as much enthusiasm as they trash Japanese and Russian ships. In their eyes, the rest of Korea turned their backs on Wonsan.
◗ Kyungsang@pyo.sunpak.ko

◗ And for this reason, the Japanacorps often hire Wonsan pirates when they want to trash a Korean rival's shipping or undersea operations. Also, Wonsan pirates are notorious for their ruthlessness and can give even the IJN the fight of their lives.
◗ Blowfish

Ch'ongjin

The farthest north of the Korean pirate ports, Ch'ongjin is also the farthest from most of the Japanacorps' underwater facilities. However, it is also very close to Vladivostok, so Shiawase and Mitsuhama have been hiring pirates in Ch'ongjin to spy on Yamatetsu operations.

The most interesting feature of Ch'ongjin is its relative closeness to Awakened Manchuria—the shortest route to the Manchurian border is a little more than a hundred kilometers. This has made Ch'ongjin an excellent base of operations for overland smugglers and tailsleggers, who leave for Manchuria laden with electronics and other manufactured goods, and return with bootleg telesma, fetishes, and foci. From here, Ch'ongjin cyberpirates buy the magical goods from the tailsleggers and ship them over (and under) water to fixers in Japan or southern China.

Ch'ongjin has been getting quite a few foreign "travelers" and is becoming quite the cosmopolitan city, by Korean standards (Vladivostok's proximity definitely affects this). The smuggling community is very large and diversified, and it's not particularly dominated by any single syndicate, so if you're a Seattle runner you won't stick out or be completely isolated.

◗ A few Ch'ongjin sea smugglers also run smuggled Manchurian magic ware to Vladivostok or Petropavlovsk, where they sell them in turn to long-haul smugglers making runs from Vladivostok to Seattle. There aren't many of these Russian runs, since the Koreans have to compete with the far greater volume of magical telesma coming out of Siberia. Nevertheless, there is demand in Seattle for Manchurian bootleg magic ware (particularly from the Seattle Triads). The Russians have a difficult time running the Manchurian border from Vladivostok, due to the currently tense relations between Russia and Manchuria, so they find it easier to buy from the Koreans.
◗ Chiun@wots.xna.ko

◗ Unlike Pusan and Wonsan, the large majority of Korean pirates in Ch'ongjin are independent from the Korean Rings. I guess this is kind of in keeping with Ch'ongjin's role as a primarily smuggling port. Smugglers survive by knowing the land, and whenever they sense a syndicate like the Rings moving into their market, they can go to ground easily and vanish from the syndicate enforcers.
◗ The Flying Canadian

◗ One interesting thing is that Ch'ongjin smugglers (and to a degree, some of the pirates in Wonsan) primarily make use of submarines and minisubs. This is kind of a holdover from the previous communist regime, which used subs a lot to insert commandos behind the lines in South Korea and Japan. When North Korea fell, a lot of subs and minisubs suddenly became available.
◗ Chorlin Zoombata@chj.awns.ne.ko

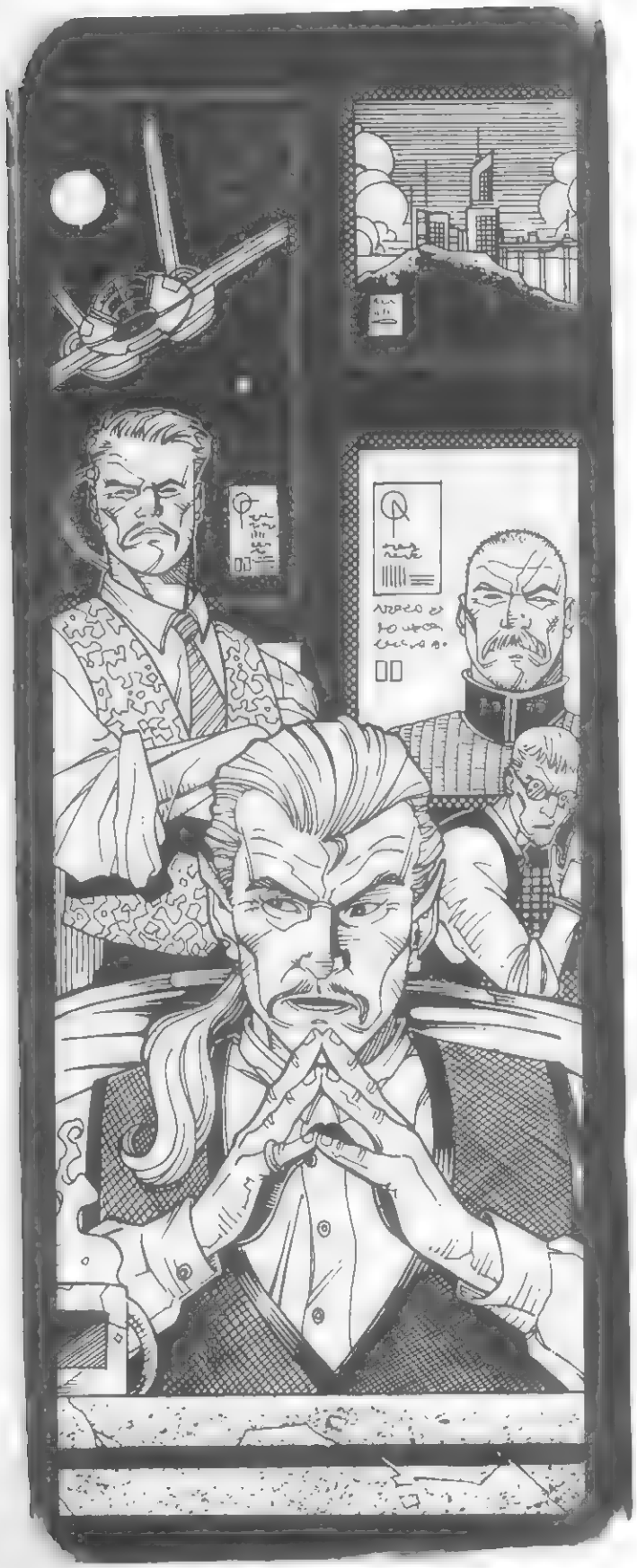
◗ Actually, using submarines makes a lot of sense. Submarines, when submerged, are very hard for other submarines to detect and virtually impossible for surface ships to find. Given that the IJN dominates the Sea of Japan, the only way the smugglers and pirates can move about with any real amount of freedom is by submarine.
◗ Mancuso

THE NORTH ATLANTIC— ARKOBLOCKS AND ECO-WARS

by Mal-de-Mer

Greetings to the chummers of Shadowland from the other side of the Pond! When we here in the Helix heard about the good Captain Chaos seeking info on smugglers, pirates, and such high-sea shadowstuff to give our stomachs butterflies, I thought I'd chip in.

◗ Query: Helix?
◗ Code Kid



• The Hague Data Haven, Shadowland Node, and all-around swell place for deckers and black information in the Netherlands.
• Hacktic

For quite a while, the North Atlantic's been an ongoing battle, with the big, bad megacorps on one side and the eco-activists and pirates on the other. Late last year, however, the wave-making big news was Proteus, a German sea-construction corporation, which filed a claim with the Draco Foundation for its arkoblocks on the North Sea.

PROTEUS AG

Proteus has been making quite a name for itself in the past two years. In 2057, Proteus christened its new central headquarters on the flooded island of Helgoland, the crowning jewel in its collection of arkoblocks (that's offshore arcology blocks for you seps) built atop the flooded lands of North Germany and the Netherlands. During that same year, Proteus also announced the construction of a space-launching arcology on Devil's Island, French Guyana (located a bit upwind of Amazonia).

Very late last year, Proteus submitted a claim to the Draco Foundation's German office in Hannover for the five million nuyen award for underwater cities, submitting that its arkoblocks met the specific conditions. Draco board member Aina Dupree, along with an entourage of engineers and technicians, went to inspect each of the five arkoblocks. However, after completing the tour, Aina returned to the states and declared that none of the arkoblocks met the specifications laid down by the Draco Foundation.

• The primary issue, as I understand the press release, is regarding the nature of the arcology. According to the board members, the underwater city must be completely submerged and completely self-sufficient, able to continue functioning should contact be cut off from the surface world. The arkoblocks are large superstructures, with part submerged beneath the water and part above. So that didn't meet the first requirement of complete immersion. Also, several of the engineers voiced some concerns over the self-sufficiency of each of the arkoblocks, so Proteus also failed that requirement.
• TDC@archnet.rpi.edu

Accepting this announcement with an unusual amount of graciousness, Proteus went on to announce their intention to construct a ninth arcology offshore from Rømø Island, near the border between Germany and Denmark. In accordance with Draco Foundation specifications, this arcology will be completely underwater and completely self-sufficient. Construction is slated to start by the end of the year, with the arcology going to full operation sometime in 2065.

• Not if the other Eurocorps have any say in the matter. Proteus has been kicking their hoop in this field for some time now, but they've all been too preoccupied or disdainful of a small corp that wants to play in toxic water. Suddenly that new corp is bigger and better, AND it's making the rest of the lot look like they got

caught with their pants around their ankles. The Draco Foundation's decision to reject the claim gave them a temporary reprieve, so they're working very hard to play catch-up and to overtake Proteus.

Less than four months after the Proteus claim was rejected, the German corporation IFMU announced its intention to construct an aquacology in the Baltic Sea. Also, there's a rumor circulating in the European business rags that Renraku Europa has plans in the works for an underwater arcology offshore from Malta in the Mediterranean. (I guess they're looking for an encore to top the Seattle arcology.)

◗ Marquis de Lignes@cgbn.minitel.fr

◗ The interesting point about the Draco Foundation tour was that it was the first public viewing of one of their arkoblocks. Since they were built, no one except Proteus bigwigs has been able to get in (and get out again alive). All their arkoblock employees are required to sign a ten-year contract that doesn't allow them to leave until that time is up. First one gets out in late 2063.

◗ Gryff

◗ Bulldrek. You just read it yourself—the arkoblocks are not self-sustaining. Someone has to leave, sometime.

◗ Skeptic

◗ Why don't we just ask? HEY YOU! Yeah, you, any of you drekwit runners reading this! Have you ever been on a run inside a Proteus AG arkoblock?

◗ Walzer

◗ That's a negative, Walzy. Wanna know something else interesting? I can't find anything but the Proteus Main Office in the Matrix, and it's loaded with more icy attitude than my ex-girlfriend. I was starting to think their arkoblocks communicated by carrier pigeon until I managed to get into a Proteus satellite. It was carrying a lot of traffic, but the encryption was hot and the host even hotter—best rez I've seen in a satellite—so I had to bail quick.

◗ Grid Reaper

◗ I know the Klabauterbund has done some structure hits on Proteus arkoblocks, but I don't think they've ever gotten inside. And BTW, Grid, you've never had a girlfriend who wasn't anime.

◗ Shockwave Sie

◗ Personally, we never saw a point in hitting the arkoblocks themselves—security is so tight, they'd see the raid coming before you even had the idea. We prefer to pick off their supply ships—less corpsec and good hauls. Some of them have been mighty interesting, in fact.

◗ Pet Shop Hunter

◗ Did I mention that the Proteus sat I was in had two of the arkoblocks in its footprint?

◗ Grid Reaper

Corporate History

So here's the scan on Proteus, mystery corp o' the month, as far as we can reconstruct.

Proteus was officially chartered in the German Alliance on the first day of 2049, although there have been rumors that construction of its headquarters may have begun as early as January of 2048 (under a shell company). There have also been speculations that one or more larger corporations may have been secretly backing Proteus at the time, based on the high start-up capital required for its arkoblock ventures. Proteus also had a full staffing of personnel at its time of inception, despite an apparent lack of advertisement for job seekers, which lends further credence to the possibility of secret backers. Of course, this is all circumstantial so far—we haven't gotten any hard evidence loaded onto the Helix. Yet.

From what we've reconstructed, Proteus's primary fields in their early years were biology and biotechnology. They still seem to be involved in heavy research in this field, but we have yet to see a biotech product or patent with Proteus's name on it. That's ten years of research with nothing to show for it, and yet this corp is growing. Mysteries are our weak spot, so we kept hacking away.

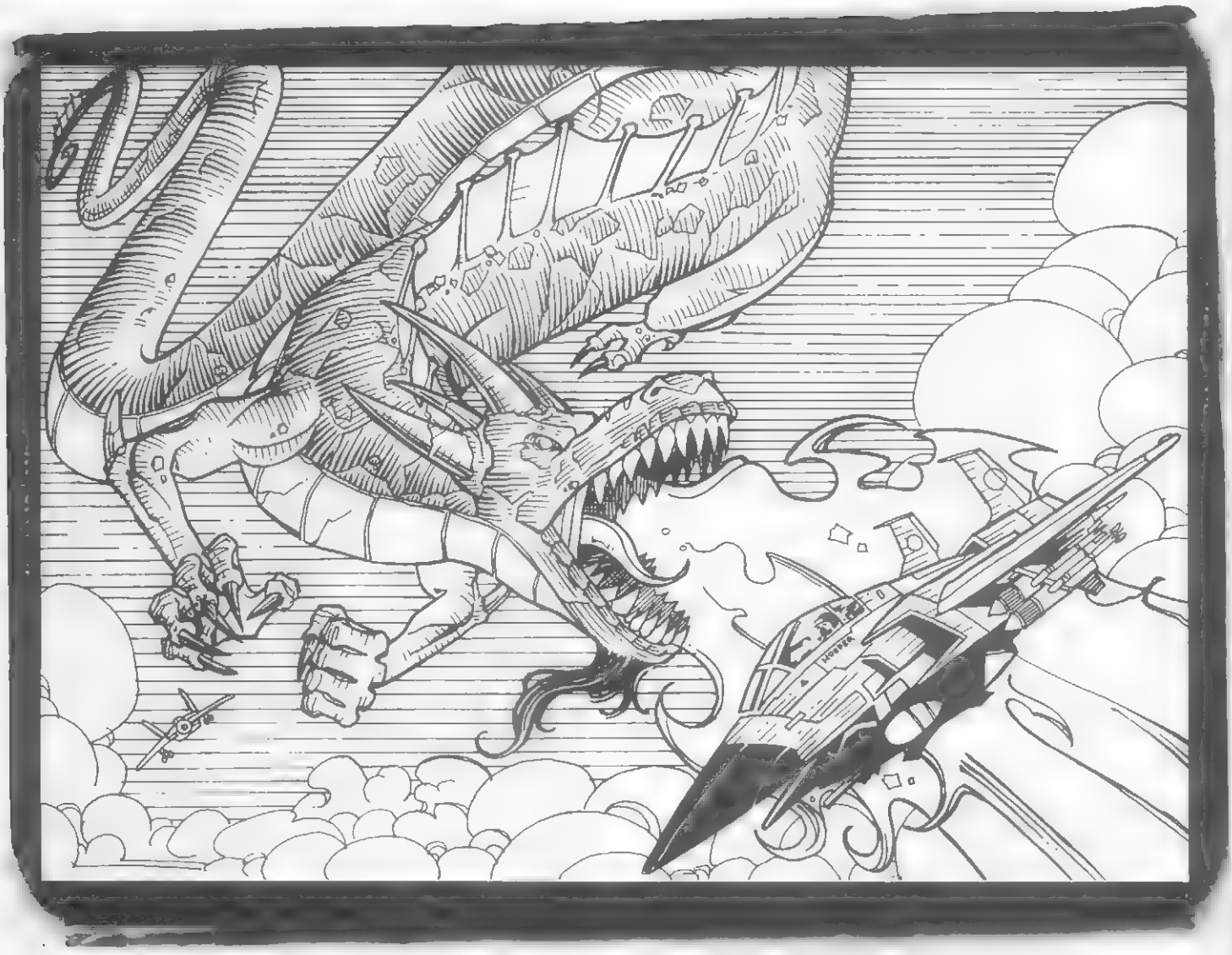
In 2050, the corporation won two contracts to build offshore arcologies in the Japanese islands, one in the Bay of Osaka, and the other one offshore from Okinawa. Both were completed in 2053, the Okinawa arcology in March and the Osaka arcology in August. Trying to trace the routing of the money for these projects will get you the biggest ice-induced migraine you've ever had.

In 2051, Proteus had grown large enough to qualify for extraterritoriality under the guidelines set by the German Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe. It was then that the corporation really took off, commissioning the construction of the North Sea arkoblocks in Emden, Groningen (in the United Netherlands), Wilhelmshaven, and Cuxhaven. The Emden arkoblock was the first to be completed, in June of 2054. Groningen and Wilhelmshaven followed in 2055, and Cuxhaven was the last in 2057.

◗ FYI, the arkoblocks have approximately 310 floors, as they are designed to accommodate three million people. They average around 500 by 1,500 meters at the base and 1,700 meters high. Depending on where the block is situated, the bottom 50 to 250 floors will be underwater. The bottom two hundred floors are usually living space, shops, and so forth, while the rest are Proteus playgrounds: factories, labs, and so forth.

◗ Ark Tech

Now, this next bit is a little confusing. Nobody seems to be exactly sure what happened in 2056, but as best as we can make out, Proteus was the target of an attempted hostile take-over by AG Chemie Europa, a second-tier Eurocorp and one of the top manufacturers in the European chemical industry. It's highly likely that AG Chemie was in collusion with an Eastern dragon named Chong-chao, who was also a Proteus sponsor/partner in building the Japanese arkoblocks. In any case, hostilities of some sort broke out, but ended quickly, and Proteus has remained mostly unchanged (as far as we can tell).



• It was very puzzling what happened on the fifth of May that year. There aren't any solid leads, but after that date, Proteus headquarters were temporarily closed for extensive "reconstruction." Witnesses reported fighting between AG Chemie and Proteus troops, as well as an aerial dogfight involving at least one dragon.
• Sandmann@f-n.pro.de

• The hostile takeover failed all right—one of the dracoforms involved was smoked by another, although I'm afraid my lawyer has advised me that I have no recollection of who it was and what they had to do with anything.
• Nachtmusik

• What is this, Aztechnology East? These slags cannot be that mysterious. Do your homework before you waste our bandwidth
• Spade

Corporate Profile

Proteus has built and currently operates eight arkoblocks. Five of them are in the North Sea, two are in the Pacific near Japan, and one is offshore from South America. Proteus also maintains a mini-arcology in Berlin. In other words, they're busy corporate beavers, and it's time someone busted their dam.

Proteus's primary business these days is in heavy industry, with a focus on aquatechnology. Proteus maintains an extensive fleet, both surface and submarine, and also it operates large ventures in underwater resource mining, particularly of petroleum and natural gas. They also run several marine biological research labs, as well as several biotechnology farms raising algae and plankton.

• And how do human genetic experiments fit into this overall picture?
• Matrix-dancer@sova.sc.co.de

◗ You mean the Genera scandal in 2056?
◗ Sandmann@f-n.pro.de

◗ Genera scandal?
◗ Overkil

◗ Back in 2056, a Green Cell faction distributed to several European media stations a stack of documents they had "acquired." These documents exposed evidence of unethical genegineering experiments conducted on humans by the South African corporation Genera. Additionally, these documents showed that Genera had also received shipments of "materiel" from several other European corporations, namely AG Chemie Europa, Mitsuhama Western Europe, and Proteus AG. However, during the subsequent investigation of Genera, a lot of incriminating evidence was destroyed, and investigators couldn't find any positive proof of involvement by anyone outside Genera.
◗ Sandmann@f-n.pro.de

◗ "Materiel," Sandmann? That's not what I think it is, is it?
◗ LISA@helix.nl

◗ It should be pointed out that despite the toxic nature of the North Sea, Proteus has done little, if anything, to clean up their environment. I had a look-see at some sketches (liberated from the Draco Foundation) for the arkoblocks' "purification" plants, and let's just say I wouldn't want to be the offspring of anyone who lives in one.
◗ Seh Grun

With the development of a space-launching arcology on Devil's Island in the French Guyana, however, Proteus is now making advances into the aerospace and orbital industry. It looks like it will probably be awhile before they can compete with current space-going corporations, such as Ares or Fuchi.

◗ From an engineering point of view, diversifying into space makes a little bit of sense for an aquatech company like Proteus. After all, both areas specialize in facility operations in very hostile environments, and both are strongly reliant upon heavy industry. Also, there isn't a lot of competition for development in either market
◗ Digi-talisman@ing.thd.ac.de

◗ Sure, only while Ares Space thinks of Proteus as a noncompetitor
◗ They Call Him Keynes@f-npro.de

◗ Don't forget, it looks like Yamatetsu's jumping on the space bandwagon, and Saeder-Krupp may dive into the dogpile as well.
◗ KonWacht

OTHER CORPORATIONS

While Proteus has lately been the most conspicuous corporation conducting underwater operations in the North Atlantic, there are quite a few others who preceded them on the sea scene, or are just now getting into the act. Here's a quick browse of some of the other players and what they've got cooking on and in the water.

AG Chemie Europa

At one time the largest chemical manufacturing corporation in Europe, AG Chemie also owns and operates numerous petroleum wells in the North Atlantic. Most of AG Chemie's petroleum wells are outside the North Sea, however, farther north in newer fields offshore from Norway and Iceland. Tapped around the turn of the century, these fields lie in the Norwegian Sea and the North Cape.

◗ Which means extensive underwater ops. When you get that far north, the winter weather becomes a real slitch, and the storms have just gotten worse after the Awakening. That means that for three-quarters of the year, working on an offshore rig isn't simply miserable, it's downright undoable. However, weather doesn't mean squat when you're under the surface, so a lot of AG Chemie's rigs are purely underwater setups.
◗ Brøtbør@nsao.ne.no

◗ AG Chemie also uses a lot of sub tankers to haul petroleum from the rigs to refineries in Norway and Germany. The weather pretty much rules out surface tankers, and some of the flats in the Norwegian Sea are simply too deep for pipelines. This is the weak link in AGC's petroleum ops, since it's a lot easier for pirates to hit tankers than to raid rigs or tap pipelines. Consequently, AG Chemie invests a lot in escort subs to protect its underwater tanker fleet.
◗ Hermsgervørden@nsao.ne.no

◗ Another concern for AGC out that way is underwater paracritters. The Norwegian Sea and North Cape don't have the same problems with pollution and toxic spirits that the North Sea has, but they have to deal with the resident denizens of the deep, which grow huge. The leviathans and the megalodons are the most dangerous. Some of the leviathans grow as big as a small destroyer. And there have been reports of some aggressive megalodons actually doing serious damage to a hunter sub.
◗ Jurgen Wigg@apwx.ne.no

AG Chemie has many hooks buried deep inside various German leaders and can exert significant if not controlling power in Frankfurt, the North German Federation, and the German Alliance as a whole. In this arena, AG Chemie most frequently conflicts with Saeder-Krupp, a position that inevitably becomes painful for the chemcorp. The competition here has also increased recently, as both corps are close to developing a new plasteel polymer and have poached scientists from each other three times in two months.

Zeta-ImpChem

Zeta-ImpChem is a second-tier British-Swiss chemical corporation, and AG Chemie's primary competitor. Like its rival, Zeta-ImpChem runs a number of offshore petroleum and gas fields, but unlike AG Chemie, many of its rigs are located in the shallow but pol-

luted waters of the North Sea. Because of this, Zeta-ImpChem security forces have to deal with not only Green Cell guerrillas and North Sea pirates, but also toxic sea spirits and storm dolphins as well.

In the past, Zeta-ImpChem and AG Chemie monopolized the chemicals market, keeping other corps out and engaging in a friendly rivalry. In recent years, that camaraderie has soured, and the two often engage in open hostilities, especially in lawless areas like the North Sea. Both are more than willing to hire runners to disrupt, sabotage, or raid the other. The situation is complicated by the fact that Zeta-ImpChem owns a controlling share of one of AG Chemie's three core companies, and uses this position ruthlessly. On more than one occasion, we've gotten word that ZIC had arranged for microchemistry field testing to be performed on AG Chemie personnel, with drastic consequences.

Being chemcorps, both AG Chemie and ZIC are highly interested in the effects of toxicity on the environment, mutation, and paranormal effects. The North Sea offers several opportunities for research projects in these areas.

● No drek, when they can't find a pile of toxic sludge to analyze, they just invent a new one and watch what it does.
● Gretchen

● ZIC is hard at work on developing smart corrosives in their North Sea labs. If you run 'em, be careful what you breathe, touch, and carry off with you.
● Shellfish

● Both AG Chemie and ZIC will pay top cred for mutant paracritters, too, especially if you get 'em live.
● Rabid

IFMU

IFMU stands for the *Internationale Fahrzeug- und Maschinenbau-Union*, German for the International Vehicle and Machine Building Union, a consortium of heavy industrial companies including Daimler-Benz and Messerschmidt-Kawasaki. Their Technical Development Division, GestE, sponsors many construction projects in Eastern Europe.

● GestE works by entering into joint partnerships with smaller local companies and providing financial and technical support. Nominally, the locals are in charge of the construction, and it's their name on the facility. In practice, however, because GestE controls both the money and the technical expertise, the real power resides with IFMU.
● Rubycon@umbranet.it

● That's the golden rule of business: he who has the gold, makes the rules.
● Bung

In response to the meteoric rise of Proteus, which competes with GestE in some similar lines, IFMU-GestE has entered into a cooperative project with Kopitsuu, an Estonian metals company, to establish an underwater mining operation for extracting titanium, nickel, and cobalt nodules from the Baltic Sea.

● I won't say where I heard it, but there's a rumour going around that they're actually digging down there for something much more interesting than metal.
● Spelunker

HIGH-SEAS ECO-WAR

It seems Gingerbread Man, Cap'n Krupp, and the other good folks who posted in that pirates download late last year missed a spot in their world tour of high-seas piracy, as our North Atlantic region also has its fair share of cinematic and outrageous pirates. However, there aren't nearly as many as the Caribbean League or the West African coast, and most of them are not your stereotypical pirate personality, so the mistake is understandable.

Many of the pirates of the North Atlantic are eco-pirates who go after companies with notorious reps as polluters or despoilers: AG Chemie, Zeta-ImpChem, Saeder Krupp, or Proteus. Rather than raiding for cred or survival, they have a driving goal to hurt the companies they've targeted; what goods they do plunder and sell on the shadow-markets usually go to cover expenses for weapons, explosives, and so on.

Green Cells

In a way, the Green Cells are the current incarnation of two different political movements from the last century: radical environmentalists and anti-imperialist cells. Back in the 1970s and 1980s, there was a large radical political movement in Germany. Originally based in anti-nuclear politics, it expanded into a larger autonomous movement of anarchists, squatters, libertarian communists, anti-fascists, and so forth. From this movement came armed resistance groups like the communist Red Army Faction and others that followed more of a nonhierarchical cell structure, with names such as the Revolutionary Zellen (Revolutionary Cells) and Rote Zora (Red Zora). These groups waged armed campaigns against capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy by targeting corporations, government officials, embassies, and so forth. Many of the smaller cells focused on campaigns against specific corporations or research—sabotaging Shell gas stations for their role in South Africa, digging up genetically altered crops, downing power lines connected to nuclear plants, or engaging in urban warfare with fascists.

● Rote Zora was an all-woman group that specifically attacked corporations that oppressed women in Third World countries. Recently, their name has been revived by radical elements within the Mutter-Erde Policlub and Sie feminist society. Their first action targeted BuMoNa (Germany's version of DocWagon) for their program to forcibly sterilize ork and troll women in Frankfurt.
● Shockwave Sie

Since that time, these groups and their politics have changed and evolved. The RAF still lives on in a different incarnation—now as the neo-leninist Antiimperialistische Armee (AIA). The more anarchistic RZs dissolved eventually into the anarchist affinity

groups that seized Kronstadt in 2034 and Berlin in 2038, and form the constituency of groups such as the Shockwave Riders and Klabauterbund. Many of these anarchists added a greener perspective to their politics and formed the revolutionary Green Cells.

With members hailing from Barcelona in the west to St. Petersburg in the east, the Green Cells are a loose organization of small radical environmentalist groups whose aim is to punish corporations that engage in pollutive measures. By causing a lot of damage in their attacks, their intent is to convince the corporations that it is too costly (both in terms of publicity and property damage) to continue environmentally damaging practices.

Each individual Green Cell contains anywhere from ten to a hundred members, though the average membership in each cell is in the low twenties. There is no formal central command structure coordinating the various cells; however, individual cell members maintain informal connections with other cells, resulting in a shifting, ad hoc network of interconnections amongst the various cells. Because of this very loose organization, no one, not even the Green Cell members themselves, knows exactly how many different cells make up the entire Green Cell movement.

◗ If this sounds very similar to the big grapevine used by pirates, it is. The Green Cells borrowed this organization from North Sea pirates, some of whom have sea experience in other parts of the world, such as the Caribbean, Mediterranean or African Coasts.
◗ Drake@z144.trap1.apcnet.uk

◗ Hey, duckboy, didn't you scan the text? This sort of leaderless cell structure has been used by anarchists and other radicals since last century, from the RZs to TerraFirst! to the Animal Liberation Front. The pirates picked it up from the politicos. The beauty of the system is that there is no formal membership—as long as you agree to, and act by, a set of basic principles, you can start your own Green Cell with your close buddies and strike out. The smart ones stick with trusted, well-known friends, and don't associate with other Grünen Zellen, so they tend to avoid surveillance and infiltration. Your next-door neighbor, your coworker, even your mom might be in one. Those are the ones who rarely get caught.
◗ Archangel

◗ Even though many Cells are like that, they're not isolated from the rest. They keep in touch through underground screamsheets, private and secure Matrix haunts, anonymous and encrypted communication, and even pirate tridcasts. I hear some of the better-connected Cells have conducted training camps, but even that's a bit too risky in the minds of many
◗ Clash

◗ Ja, with the *Bundesamt für Innere Sicherheit* (BIS, or Confederate Office for Internal Security) attempting to infiltrate your group so they can entrap you and send their *Grenzschutzgruppen* (GSG) hit teams after your Cell, you'd be careful too. The GSG is especially infamous for assassinating those they could easily have captured. Saves on prison costs.
◗ Ingrid

◗ Yeah, well, membership has its privileges. With no official structure, there ain't much to keep a corp from establishing its own not-so Green Cell and acting in the GC name. Some of them, like Zeta-ImpChem, are masters at this form of black propaganda. Then it's up to the real Green Cells to counter the media hype (usually losing to the corporate media presence) and dig up, root out, and eradicate the impostors.
◗ Clausen

◗ The leaderless resistance philosophy was picked up by some of the fascists last century too, and is still used by Nationale Aktion, Nationale Front, Blood & Purity, and other neo-fascists.
◗ Antifa

◗ Recently there's been a movement by some Green Cells in the German region of Schleswig-Holstein to establish a more centralized structure. Spearheading this drive is Eva Susinka, a mercurial Nordic blonde known for her strategic genius, artistic flair, and wild mood swings between depression and mania. She's assembled a Steering Committee to coordinate the actions of Green Cells in the North and Baltic Seas, and established herself as chairwoman. She's been arguing that the loose cell structure has hindered the effectiveness of coordinated campaigns against larger corps, particularly AG Chemie and Proteus.

So far, her ideas haven't been too popular outside that region, but she has won some Cells over by establishing some very good relations with Russian sub pirates. She has definitely consolidated a large measure of power very quickly, and seems to have some other Cells worried
◗ Irkestrøm@bo.benn.dk

The overall strategy of the Green Cells is to create as much property damage as possible to pollution-intensive industries. Consequently, the majority of Green Cell tactics focus on quick hit-and-run raids, magical sabotage and the occasional Matrix trashing. They try to avoid taking life whenever possible, in compliance with their green politics, but some of them have clearly decided that some people are too dangerous to the environment to be allowed to live.

◗ Some radical eco-activists from North American groups like Save Our Seas and TerraFirst! were seen up in Kiel talking to Eva Susinka recently. Normally the Americans and Europeans have had pretty good relations, but from what I could piece together, they seemed to get a cool reception this time. I'm under the impression they were seeking something Susinka had access to.
◗ Irkestrøm@bo.benn.dk

◗ That doesn't surprise me. Susinka's Green Cells care mostly about the European ecosystem in general, focusing mainly on fighting the Eurocorps, most of whom are second-tier players. The NA eco-groups, on the other hand, have their sights aimed much higher and are trying to take on the Big Eight.
◗ Deep Green

◗ What's the difference between these Green Cell gumps and GreenWar?
◗ Libby

◗ There's several. GreenWar was much bigger about ten years back, and more international in scope. They also had a centralized structure, led by folks in Germany. Many of their members were "deep ecologists," meaning they had some funky racist attitudes regarding overpopulation, blaming the victims instead of megacorp and government policies. The presence of toxic shamans tore apart their group from within, and their effective strength remains small

The Green Cells had an alliance of sorts with GreenWar, but their politics are much different—more "social ecologists." The Cells see ecological devastation as tied in to other forms of oppression and control, and see fighting for the environment as a priority over other struggles only because of our precarious slouching toward ecological collapse in some areas

Most of these eco-groups comingle and support one another to some degree. Many Awakened Liberation Front (ALF) commandos graduated from the Green Cells or TerraFirst!, and vice versa. It's not uncommon for them to train or do actions together, and they also take advantage of one another's support networks and underground railroads.
◗ Ecotope

◗ Wait a minute, if these slags are such Luddites, why are they using the Matrix to attack corps? Isn't technology anathema to them?
◗ 2D

◗ Not all of them are primitivists. In fact, most aren't—they want a society where everyone has access to and control over technology, not where technology is used to control the mass of people. If it can be used as a tool against the enemy and doesn't hurt the environment, they'll use computers, explosives, corrosives, cybered runners ... but their friends in the Klabauterbund are a different matter.
◗ Unnatural

THE KLABAUTERBUND

Taking its name from the Klabautermann, a fairy-being from German maritime legend, this policlub openly advocates anarchism and environmental restoration. Attracting a large number of artists, free thinkers, and metahumans, the Klabauterbund actively opposes the megacorps and preaches a natural way of life free from high technology. They are active throughout North Germany, as well as the Frisian regions of the United Netherlands and in southern Denmark, and make their headquarters in Hamburg, where they claim over five thousand residents as members.

In its crusade against the "corrupting effects of technology," the Klabauterbund has established close connections with the Green Cells and many North Sea pirates, both on the continent and in Scandinavia. They have been known to sponsor pirate gangs and acts of piracy in the past, justifying it as an act of self-defense against megacorporate oppression.

◗ The Klabauterbund justify piracy, but only as long as the pirates do not enrich themselves through their ill-gotten gains. They've been known to attack pirate gangs that have displayed extravagant opulence and greed or that spend too much on "technological fetishism." Just last year, in 2058, the Klabauterbund went to war with and virtually wiped out a Danish pirate group called the Ice Warriors, whose members sported extensive cyberware and had acquired state-of-the-art smart antiship weapons (both big no-nos in Klabauterbund dogma).
◗ Wuzzel@pgkf.hh.de

◗ The fact that the Ice Warriors fragged the K-kids on a joint run, sold out to AG Chemie, and sliced up a squatfull of them might have had something to do with it.
◗ Edelweiss

The Klabauterbund also attracts a large number of magically talented folks, ranging from adepts to European nature magicians to hermetic mages. One of the central beliefs of the Klabauterbund is that one day the kobolds (spirits) of all the world's ships will awaken and take revenge for metahumanity's misuse of the world's oceans.

◗ Which leads many to suspect that there may be quite a few toxics in the upper ranks of the Klabauterbund leadership. The Klabauterbund openly proclaims its bond to the North Sea, and everyone knows how polluted that is. And in the ways of magic, such symbolic and metaphorical ties often result in drastic changes in a magician's outlook and magical practices
◗ Hierophant@ac.uni-hd.de

◗ So far this year, the Klabauterbund has almost vanished from the scene, as many of its more visible and vocal advocates have suddenly fallen silent and removed themselves from public view. Many rank-and-file members I've talked with have also noted that they've not heard from some of the movers and shakers for quite some time, and a few of them have literally disappeared. From what I can piece together, it appears that there might be some internal dissension within the group.
◗ Witt@pgkf hh.de

◗ What I've heard also ties in with some of the things that Hierophant said about the possibility of toxics in the Klabauterbund leadership. Remember that wild story about Winternight in the download about conspiracies and stuff a couple of years ago? A couple of insiders I know have told me that they think Winternight has been infiltrating the Klabauterbund lately, so the main players went off-line this year in order to root out the corrupters
◗ BitBert

◗ There's some talented magic being wielded by some members of the Klabauterbund—perhaps even a secret initiatory group. I know for sure they are familiar with certain Awakened paracritters

that even now are still fantasy and folklore to the rest of us. If Winternight has targeted them, they'll be in for a surprise.
• Shockwave Sie

OTHER NORTH SEA PIRATES

And then there are the North Atlantic pirates who really are just in it for the money. Hey, at least they're honest ... sort of. The Klabauterbund talk down to them for their materialism and frequent use of technology, and the Green Cells despise them for being equally willing to cut a deal with a corp as to bomb them. However, frequently neither group can afford to go it alone, so they grudgingly work with these traditional pirates, under the policy of "the enemy of my enemy is my ally of convenience."

Most of the pirates who operate around here usually focus on "grab and go" types of raids. The North Atlantic is surrounded by industrialized nations that engage in a heavy amount of international trade, so there's a good amount of traffic, which means a fair amount of patrols and witnesses. The busiest lines are those taking manufactured and consumer goods from Germany to the UK. Fortunately there's many differences among the variety of small nations and city-states, so there's a decent market for smuggling, as well as room for, shall we say, "favored" treatment from certain territorial entities.

• A lot of the smuggling is short-haul—just over one or two borders. However, there are a few long-haulers who smuggle magical goods out of the Trans-Polar Aleut Council, primarily from Iceland and the North Cape. Of course, the nasty North Atlantic winters make that a seasonal occupation at best.
• Svenge@dn.tst.oslo.no

Zhelyezniy Akula

No other name draws as much fear among captains who ply the North Atlantic. The Zhelyezniy Akula, Russian for "Iron Sharks," are rogue Russian submarine crews that stalk the cold depths of the undersea, preying on cargo ships and submarines carrying valued goods.

The origins of the Zhelyezniy Akula, or simply the Akula, trace back to the rebellion of Kronstadt at the end of the Euro Wars in 2034 (see **Free City of Kronstadt,** p. 72). Several submarine crews stationed on the Baltic Sea and the North Cape mutinied during the rebellion. One went into mercenary work, several more were retained as part of the Kronstadt Militia, and the rest turned to piracy, to provide for themselves what Moscow and Kronstadt could not. Sometime in the late 2030s, several of them decided to band together for mutual protection, and thus the Zhelyezniy Akula were born. They continue to use Kronstadt as their primary port and make ample use of the naval yards still functioning there.

Akula pirates generally operate out of small diesel/electric attack submarines, usually old *Zhirinovsky*-class hunter-killers. Recently there have been reports of some Akula crews operating from more modern *Vaneyev*-class submarines, probably purchased on the grey or black markets from third parties. To date, there have been no reports of rogue Akula crews operating from nuclear submarines.

◉ No nuclear fusion submarines, perhaps. However, rumor has it that there may be one or two Akula crews that use old uranium fission reactors. These could possibly be Oscar-class missile boats, but I've also heard wags say that these Akulas use the old Akula-class attack subs. Although, given the play on words, I'd probably dismiss that as an old seamen's tale.
◉ Pelops@is.fus316.net uk

◉ Actually, Pelops old boy, I wouldn't dismiss the rumors of Akulas using Oscars out of hand. First of all, Oscars are HUGE—the cargo area reconstructed from the missile bay could easily hold two or four standardized cargo containers. Also, Oscars are tough to sink; they've got a double-hulled structure that could easily survive one torpedo hit, and possibly even two.
◉ Triton@trap1.apcnet.uk

Midnight Marauders

So-called because they always strike in the dead of night, the Marauders are a purely elven crew, most of whom are in fact Night Ones, or "dark elves." Their soft-furred and odd-colored appearance is often terrifying to victims who find themselves being raided in pitch blackness, and several interesting urban legends have arisen concerning them. The Marauders are captained by an elven woman named Morgana, and are suspected of using Hamburg as their primary port. They achieved some infamy after kidnapping and successfully ransoming Greta Hollister, wife of the division head of General Genetics Worldwide, an AG Chemie subsidiary.

◉ The Marauders have a nice mystique going, but don't buy too much of it. They wouldn't be half as successful without the dwarf and human riggers and techs in their crew, who make sure the Marauders have a variety of operable and unidentifiable ships and vehicles to use.
◉ Long John

PORTS OF CALL

So if you're expecting to participate in the action over on this side of the North Atlantic, then you'd better learn good ports to hail in. Eco-warriors and pirates tend to cluster around a certain few port cities for mutual protection. Here's a quick brief on some of the more significant ports of call.

Aberdeen

Sitting at the mouth of the Dee River on the eastern edge of the Scottish Wild Lands, the port city of Aberdeen appears to an overland traveler as a haven of civilization in the dangerous Awakened highlands. It may appear so on the surface, but the underlying reality is far different from the façade.

Because Aberdeen sits so deeply within the Scottish Wild Lands, the little authority that exists here pays only lip service to either the British crown or the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh. A good portion of the Wild Lands are ruled (to use the term *very* loosely) by rival Scottish clans, and Aberdeen is no exception, where the reigning MacRanald clan holds the reins of power, both in Aberdeen business and politics.

◉ And in the underworld, too. Moira Lammant-MacRanald holds the unofficial title as the Aberdeen pirate queen, and her control of the docks gives her considerable influence over pirate activities. She has the allegiance of several of the more powerful pirate bands, including the Braveheart Fleet and the Sea Claymores. Runners and pirates with biz in Aberdeen, or anywhere along the Scottish coast, are well-advised to be on her good side.
◉ McNair@zygo.skrsn.uk

◉ Another fact worth mentioning is that Moira is a troll, and many members of the clan MacRanald are metahuman as well (as is much of Aberdeen, which is almost 65 percent metahuman). This often brings them in conflict with the Campbell clan, a powerful clan in the Scottish Wild Lands that hates metahumans. Word on the streets is that Moira will pay extra for any cargo seized from Campbell-owned freighters.
◉ Donalbain@trap1.apcnet.uk

◉ In addition to serving as a port of call for North Sea pirates, Aberdeen is a minor smuggling port for exotic paracritters and magical material taken from the Wild Lands.
◉ Broton@talluch.unet.uk

◉ If you're going to collect telesma here, you better bring something to ward off the Celtic druids. They don't take a likin' to those who steal from their sacred groves, and they've got enough Awakened clout to make you sorry you thought of it.
◉ Alistair

◉ Someone in this town has a nice connection with Silicon Glen. There's a brisk business in Transys Neuronet cyberdecks through here, as well as softs and ware. Interestingly, the trade has brought some "resource adjusters" from another mega into town, I'm not sure who. They're scoping for ways to get inside Transys from what I hear, or perhaps get hold of some proprietary goods.
◉ Phantom

◉ If you're in a submersible, be careful around this point. Integrated Weapons Systems, a British milcorp, seems to enjoy product testing some of its new toys on various undesirable types who frequent ports like this. Of course, if you're really good, you might make the haul of your life.
◉ Gremlin

Amsterdam

Long known for its permissive culture and liberal substance laws, the Dutch city of Amsterdam remains the counterculture capital of Europe. Chips, pharmaceuticals, and other controlled substances come from ports all over the world into Amsterdam, as a trading point for smugglers distributing them to major cities in Northern, Western, and Central Europe.

◉ California hots are the particular item in demand in Amsterdam right now. While these high-intensity simsense chips are legal to use

in the United Netherlands, they are not in neighboring countries, particularly Britain and France. Consequently a lot of North American suppliers fly into Amsterdam to do business, since the high demand offsets the overhead of transatlantic travel.
• Hansje@helix.nl

Smuggling and piracy seem to be the only things going for Amsterdam, for the rest of the city has not fared well. During the Great Flood of 2011, most of the city was flooded out when the Ijsselmeer Dam burst, and many parts of northern and western Amsterdam remain flooded even in 2059. Districts north of the North Sea Canal are at or near poverty, and water-gangs riding motorboats and jet-skis fight for territory in the northeast districts of Nieuwendam and Durgerdam. Many pirates hang out on the east side of Amsterdam, where the North Sea Canal opens into the Ijsselmeer Bay, particularly around Diemen, a half-flooded district that has turned into a boat-city due to the preponderance of houseboats and motorboats in the harbor.

• Thanks to the source of this document, information is a particularly useful commodity within Amsterdam. The Helix Data Haven is second only to the Nexus at this point, and I have to say it's not so tainted with Americo-centrism. If you've got some hot, hardcore paydata, you can practically name your price. It's also one of the best places to scan, reference, and hire runners in all of Europe.
• Link

• If you're looking for work in Amsterdam, I got a job for you. Seems that some corp or somebody has been breeding proteans and using them to conveniently dispose of certain people. High-risk, high pay. A warning, though: the last two runner teams never came back.
• Jonkeer@ngin.ib.nl

Bergen

The largest of the Scandinavian cities bordering the North Sea, Bergen is the nucleus of AG Chemie's petroleum and gas operations in the Norwegian Sea, North Cape, and the Iceland-UK gap. Consequently, Bergen also attracts a large number of Green Cells targeting AG Chemie tankers and refineries. Also, a number of pirate groups base their operations in and around Bergen, as the Norwegian fjords make excellent hideaways to stage attacks against freighters and tankers.

• Pirates aren't the only ones using those fjords. Our crew has noticed signs of habitation in several out-of-the-way ones, and we've also caught glimpses here and there of small fishing canoes. They seem to be very adept at hunting and trapping Abrams lobsters. Every time we approach, though, the folks bug out and hide. Judging from the size of some items we've seen left behind, I'd say it's a reclusive colony of dwarfs, maybe more than one.
• Dread Pirate Roberts

• The Green Cells get some help from shapeshifters in the area, and I know AG Chemie and a few others have had problems with each-uisge attacks.
• Jacques

• The Russian mob, the Vory v Zakone, are really the only ones to have established a foothold here. They provide all the necessary vices for the petroleum workers, not to mention a zillion unnecessary ones. They also have thoroughly infiltrated the city's hired private police force, Wolverine Security.
• Boris

Free City of Hamburg

Despite flood, plague, and the return of magic, this former seat of the medieval Hanseatic League still maintains its status as an independent city-state within the German Alliance. Like Amsterdam, Bremen, and many other cities sitting next to the North Sea, Hamburg was badly hit by the Great Flood of 2011, which permanently washed out nearly half the metropolitan area and turned most of southern Hamburg into uninhabitable marsh. Because of its half-flooded state, Hamburg has gained the nickname "Venice of the North."

The German corps have rebuilt most of Hamburg and control most areas, but many areas along the waterfront still remain outside their control. Knight Errant holds the city contract for most police duties. The southern banks of the Elbe River are marshland and mostly uninhabited. On the northern banks, pirates and eco-warriors hide out in the half-flooded ghettos of St. Pauli and St. Georg, both of which are not too far from the city center.

• The Klabauterbund is based here, and there's several huge squatted buildings occupied just by them. Some of the squats have cafés, bars, or social centers. It's a good way to socialize and get up close if you need to.
• Roland von Bremen

• Careful, though. Nationale Aktion thugs have been known to attack squats like this and other sites where metahumans and anarchists hang out. And the metas and polis fight back. Usually even Knight Errant sits back until the mobs run out of mollies and ammo.
• Mork

• Speaking of fanatics, keep your eyes out for Jyhad X in this town. Islamic fundamentalists have a tendency to make life hell for infidels who get in their way. They've been shouldering in on the hard drugs market, to fund their other activities, and have several street gangs fronting for them, acting as pushers as well as eyes and ears.
• Fahrenheit

• The Vory and the Jyhad had a nice little street war with only a few dozen collateral casualties a few weeks back. It might've been over territory, but it seemed there were some slags from the Orthodox Church involved too. Both sides have retreated to lick their wounds for the moment. Strangely enough, some of the other religious freaks are worked up too, like the Kreuzritter and this

magician I know who worships the Creator Idol. Anyone scan what's got them worked up? The Second Coming?
◗ Dom

◗ The Yakuza are still the prime syndicate in the town, but there's so much action going on here there's no chance for them to monopolize anything except for the red-light district stuff. They've tried to open a few of their bunraku brothels, but each time the place has been torched by the Sie feminist group. The oyabun is pissed, and word is he's brought in a silent shadow to teach the girls some lessons.
◗ Shockwave Sie

◗ As with many of these northern cities, clean water is a hot item and can draw in good cred for smugglers, though the Klabauterbund seem to have a firm grasp on the underground water market. They either have some snazzy corp connection or some method of purifying it themselves.
◗ Austen

◗ Both, actually. It's a firm called WasserKraft, which seems to be partially owned by Fuchi, but the Klabauterbund have some clout with a major shareholding elf by the name of Dieter Arkona. I hear he's been getting leaned on recently, whether by Fuchi or another company I don't know. He's connected, however, so they're in for a tussle
◗ Roland von Bremen

◗ It's not in this file, but a lot of pirates and eco-freaks use islands belonging to the elven Duchy of Pomorya, just a bit west of Hamburg, as havens. Duke Jaromar Greif, who resides in the capital of Saßnitz, is a strong supporter of ecological activities. The elves have actually done a decent job cleaning the toxic drek out of the sea and their coasts
◗ Caramon

Free City of Kronstadt

A lot of you from across the pond have heard about the wonderful anarchy of Berlin, the neo-anarchist paradise. Yet I imagine few of you have heard of or been to the original anarchist free city: the Russian port of Kronstadt.

When Siberia revolted in the east in 2030 and held their own, they were quickly followed by the leaders of Belarus and the Ukraine, eager as they were to cut the few ties that still held them to the Russians. Angered, and facing starvation and economic collapse, Russia went to war on the western front as well, plowing through these countries and into Poland.

At this time, Kronstadt was the main Russian naval base, located on the island of Kotlin (Retusari, or Rat Island, to the Finnish). Its historic fortifications stand guard on the only channel leading to the port of St. Petersburg. Prior to the conflict, this area was a haven for the Vory v Zakone, who ran their primary smuggling route through here. They were also well-connected with members of the military, from whom they would purchase weapons and gear and smuggle them out. When the second front opened, the port of Kronstadt was closed, effectively crippling the Vory's operations.

The sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt have always been the most anarchistic and revolutionary element of the Russian military. Their history includes several prestigious mutinies against both czars and soviets. At the end of the Euro-Wars, the Russian war machine collapsed underneath military defeats and the weight of its own bureaucracy. War expenses depleted already-strained Russian coffers, and their notoriously inefficient government drew in far too little revenue to maintain its current budget, let alone pay for war debts. Food shortages were endemic, riots were breaking out, and even the military was strained.

When the Islamic Jihad threatened Russia in 2034 and many resources were diverted south, the people of Kronstadt had finally had enough. A coup of sorts was organized by a coalition of military officers, Vory operatives, smugglers and anarchists. In October of 2034 the soldiers and sailors mutinied, and the Kronstadt base was seized with very little effort. The following week saw a flurry of naval action, resulting in several mutineer Russian subs torpedoing several Russian naval vessels and effectively blockading the channel to St. Petersburg. A victorious council declared the "Kronstadt Republic." After several abortive attempts to recapture the cityport, the new Russian regime conceded.

◗ My, just give us the short version! This says nothing about the magical strength wielded by the rebels; the aid from Siberia, Trans-Polar Aleut, and Finnish Lapps; or what really kept the Russians from bombing Kronstadt back into the so-called Fourth World. Can we be more mysterious, please?
◗ Blank

◗ If you want to know how the rebels really kept the Russkies off their backs, read the Vladivostok file where they mention the number of missing "suitcase nukes." Ah, nuclear extortion, what a wonderful world we live in.
◗ Nucleus

◗ Bulldrek. The Kronstadt rebels didn't have a nuke, they just had conviction and tenacity, and the Russian military and government were already on their last legs. Considering that this revolt came after the Awakening, Crash, VITAS, and the Euro-Wars, do you really think the Russians were capable of fighting another extended battle? Especially against their own people?
◗ Kropotkin

For many years following the successful rebellion, politics and power within the city were a chaotic mess. Once the outside threat had subsided and it came time to actually build and run a city, the various military, criminal, and political factions ran into multiple conflicts, sometimes resulting in violence. Amazingly, the soviets, syndicates, collectives and councils that the anarchists had pulled together during the revolt seemed to be working. Much of the military had disbanded, and the Vory and smuggler groups remained small enough that the others did not consider them a threat. For a short period following the revolt, corporations were not allowed into the city, but Saeder-Krupp maneuvered

themselves into a portion of the naval yards through some treacherous back-room dealings.

Today, Kronstadt is run by no one. An emergency council is formed in times of crisis, but everyday power rests with the various factions and soviets and groups that have developed an interconnecting network of support. Some areas of the city are completely competitive and ruthless, where others are organized in a libertarian and cooperative fashion. A variety of individuals and groups conspire to make Kronstadt a dynamic city.

• In other words, some communities within the city function on actual communist principles of direct democracy, working together to provide and share basic resources, but they are mixed among a variety of groupings with different structures and agendas, such as the crime syndicates. If any group attempts to exert authority, the others get together and drag them down, because it's in everyone else's best interests to retain autonomy.
• Socio Pat

• Quite a few of these little collectives operate by the "give what you can and take what you need" principles, but the prime operating method in Kronstadt is favors. Everybody rubs everyone else's back, and it's kosher to pass on favors owed, creating an intricate framework of boons. For example, I get shot up and need my leg patched by Igor the medic. Igor needs replenishing of his pharmaceutical stock, so I trade some paydata to a Saeder-Krupp lackey that gets me info on a sweet SK shipment coming up. I trade that and a stiff drink to Pirate Jack in exchange for the pharmaceuticals he hauled in last week, and voila. Leg gets fixed. If you're new in town, however, a lot of folks will refuse to take IOUs from you—they have no guarantee you're not going to skip or get gacked within a week.
• Natasha

The smugglers of Kronstadt take pride in their ability to get goods in and out of Russia. They are the blood in the veins of the Vory underground. Chips and electronics and vehicles go in, weapons and biotech and medtech go out. Kronstadt also serves as a haven for refugees needing to escape the authoritarian Russian state, as well as criminals fleeing prosecution. For this reason, a number of bounty hunters reside in Kronstadt, keeping their ears to the ground, hoping to pick up a mark. Quite a few residents do not appreciate their presence and have been known to start fights with them. Several Russian UGB agents are also present within the city, watching for threats to Russia and gathering intelligence. Many foreign and corporate intelligence groups use the city as well, so at times it can develop into quite a den of intrigue.

◗ Argus, the secret service for the MET 2000 mercenary group, has a confidential office here. You can bet they're doing more than looking for contracts or hot spots to vacation, too. Because MET 2000 is technically a public corporation with strong ties to the German Alliance, Argus is viewed as the latest incarnation of a German spy service, and so they are not particularly welcomed in Kronstadt
◗ Jagdpanther

◗ Not to mention that both IFMU and Proteus own big chunks of MET stock.
◗ KonWatcht

◗ A lot of the cloak-and-dagger types are there to spy on the training camps operated by certain Grünen Zellen and Rote Zora types. Best to catch the terrorists while they're young and untrained ... .
◗ Peet

While the Vory are the dominant criminal faction, led by Tzar Otto Tepich, several other large gangs have consolidated. For the most part, these remain unaffiliated with international crime syndicates. One of the more infamous in the city is the Misfits, a ragtag collection of metahuman political exiles and ex-mercenaries. They've taken on the self-inspired task of "damage control" within the city—tackling paranormal hazards, confronting and exiling extreme troublemakers, and imposing the occasional "service tax" on corporate representatives who visit the city. Their vigilante behavior has created a serious amount of friction with other groups, which see them as accumulating too much power within the city. A more respected outfit within Kronstadt is the NetWorkers, an ad hoc grouping of deckers and techs who collaborate on keeping the city connected to the Matrix. They'll hook up other groups in the city in exchange for food, gear, or owed favors.

Saeder-Krupp remains the only significant corporate presence within Kronstadt. The only reason it hasn't been driven out yet is because the corp wisely invested a sizable chunk of nuyen into the city, especially into revitalizing the naval yards and keeping the technology state of the art. The functioning shipyards have been a vital element in Kronstadt's survival and a much-needed and well-used aspect of the city. In return for this service, Saeder-Krupp was given a large portion of the military materiel left over in the city and allowed to station a facility in the yards themselves. Most Saeder-Krupp workers stay within the compound, preferring not to risk themselves in the anarchic city.

◗ Kronstadt and Berlin also keep close contact and provide support for each other as two of the only true autonomous zones in the world. To a lesser extent, they have alliances with Hamburg and the Free State of Könisberg, although the corporate dominance in these cities manifests as drastic differences in policy.
◗ Rand

Needless to say, Kronstadt is a popular port for pirates, eco-warriors, and other subversive elements. Quite a large entertainment neighborhood has sprung up near the dock and yards to provide travelers with some fun, rest, and relaxation (usually robbing them blind in the process). A Roma family (that's gypsies for you Yanks) actually runs a lot of the entertainment and red-light zones. They're known as the Floating Roms, because at any given time half their family is at sea, making a living the buccaneer way.

UNDERWATER SECURITY

by Undertow

Underwater cities and bases cost the corps millions, sometimes billions, of nuyen to build and maintain. So you can bet your hoop that they'll spent millions to keep them secure.

Fortunately or unfortunately (depending on your point of view), being underwater imposes a lot of special considerations. Many of the familiar security tricks that we shadowrunners know and hate either don't work well or don't work at all underwater. On the other hand, similar limitations restrict us, which kind of evens the odds. Here's a run-down on all the major differences in security measures used to guard against us runner types.

SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

We might as well start by eliminating the obvious. Most conventional surveillance measures—cameras, thermographic scanners, motion detectors, and so on—are ineffective underwater. The shifting currents underwater spoil thermographic vision and motion detectors, and water gradually absorbs infrared emissions beyond a range of four meters.

Water absorption of light also limits the effectiveness of video cameras, particularly in deep-sea bases below two hundred meters. Below that point, the ambient lighting is no brighter than early evening dusk. Below a thousand meters, it's pitch black, as virtually no sunlight penetrates at all. Of course, one way to get around this is by using artificial lighting, but because of light absorption, that's effective up to only two hundred meters away from the light source.

◗ One trick the corps try is using blue-spectrum cameras with Low-Light image intensifiers. Blue light has the longest transmission distance in seawater, up to two hundred meters, and Low-Light imaging can amplify that range by several factors. The result is a very sharp, albeit monochrome, image of the area being scanned, up to five hundred meters.
◗ Cutty Sark

◗ Another limitation of artificial lighting Undertow didn't mention is that light generates heat, and heat attracts life forms, such as barnacles, coral, anemones, starfish, and so on. After a week, so many marine life forms cluster around the light source that it doesn't emit any illumination at all, often forcing divers to go out and clean them. And usually the number of divers available for this kind of duty is small, or at least smaller than the number of artificial light sources needing to be cleaned off.
◗ Man-a-T@spq-n5.son.net

Of course, one system that works very well underwater is sonar. Sound travels much faster in water than in air, so passive sonar systems can detect metahuman intruders as far as a kilometer away.

◗ Quite a few security systems employ high-frequency ultrasonic sonar systems. Although ultrasonics have a range of only a few meters in air, the range is several hundred meters underwater. Underwater security systems use active ultrasonic sonar as a sort of anti-personnel radar to detect metahuman-sized intruders. Unfortunately (for them, that is), the range isn't good enough to detect ships or other vehicles beyond four hundred meters.
◗ Cutty Sark

◗ It's almost impossible to spoof an ultrasonic sonar system. However, in most underwater places the area's going to be crowded with fish and other sea creatures, many of which are as big as a dwarf and almost as big as a human. Because there are so many distractions out there, an inattentive sonar operator might overlook a casual swimmer, or even one concealed in a school of fish
◗ Moray

◗ You mundanes are so simple in your outlook: a simple spell of silence will spoof sonar easily.
◗ Trevor

◗ You're the one who's simple, Trevor. In some ways a silence spell is a dead giveaway, particularly with regards to active systems. An active system will register echoes from surrounding terrain, such as rock piles, seamounts, and so on. A silence spell acts like a big "hole" that will mute the echoes of normal terrain. So when the sonar system gets silence when it should be getting a terrain echo, that will set off the alarms just as easily.
◗ Man-a-T@spq-n5.son.net

SECURITY PATROLS

Unlike surface facilities, you won't find a lot of manned patrols underwater. Decompression is the primary reason, since normal scuba equipment limits underwater exposure to less than 40 minutes. For some particularly deep facilities, underwater diving is nigh-impossible. True, minisubs can provide a way to get around decompression, but submarines are *expensive*. And considering how much is already being spent in supporting an aquacology, armed minisubs may not be the most cost-effective means of maintaining security.

More often than not, security divers and armed minisubs are held in reserve in the event an alarm is raised. And forget speargunes, nets, and that other harmless stuff you see on the trid; security divers pack some heavy ordnance, such as gyrojet guns, Colt water carbines, or even minitorpedo launchers on sea sleds.

Some facilities have tried training Awakened sea critters to perform security, but with mixed results. Training sea critters is difficult, and some denizens of the deep (such as sharks) are simply untrainable. Usually, aquacologies will use sea critters when normal folks aren't supposed to be out in the water, or again, as reserves in the event an alarm goes off. Aquacologies will almost never use sea critters in combination with divers. All too often the critters are as likely to go after security divers as they are after intruders.

◗ Not all sea critters are untrainable. Farm-the-Sea has been successful in training dolphins and some of the smaller orca species into acting as watchdogs. The dolphins, which aren't aggressive enough to attack anyone, often act as watchmen and wear sophisticated sensor and sonar transponders that digitally relay what's around the dolphins to their handlers. The orcas, which tend to be more aggressive, play the part of underwater German shepherds and will go after anything that looks like a metahuman. They often carry a sensor/sonar transponder too, so their handlers know what the orcas are hunting
◗ Yukon Cornelius

◗ Universal Omnitech recently developed a special species of genegineered octopus for some of Renraku's underwater facilities in the Sea of Japan. Whenever they're disturbed by an intruder, the octopuses squirt out a cloud of massive black ink. The ink sacs have been modified so that as they dispense the ink, it also emits a loud, high-pitched squeal easily detected by passive sonar systems. So not only do the octopuses slow intruders by blinding them with ink, but they also raise the alarm to warn security.
◗ The Smiling Bandit
Striking Again! Ha! Ha! Ha!

◗ On a more menacing note, Aztechnology has an offshore pyramid near Galveston that uses cybered sharks as guard dogs. These sharks are chipped with wired reflexes, dermal armor, sharpened titanium teeth, and a lot of other silicon nastiness. The resulting cybershock from all this cyberware makes these critters meaner than a great white. They're completely uncontrollable and are strong enough even to cripple an armed minisub.
◗ Chess@ka.tx.cas

Instead of guards and watchdogs, a lot of aquacologies are turning more often to unmanned drones to fulfill patrolling requirements. The only limitations for drones are fuel and reception capability. Frequently, underwater security systems task a drone to patrol only a limited area and connect that drone to the

security network via cable, thus providing a jam-proof, continually vigilant sentinel.

◗ One particular favorite drone the aquacologies use is the Ares Sentinel™ PN-series armed security drone. The PN is the underwater version of the aboveground Sentinel P, and like its surface cousin it rides on a fixed monorail track. It even has the same firmpoint for mounting small-caliber weapons on it.
◗ Moray

Aquacologies also use free-ranging drones to provide supplementary security. To get around the absorbent effect water has on the high-frequency wavelengths used by remote control systems, aquacologies install numerous signal broadcasters over the free-ranging area that provide redundant signal retransmission.

◗ "Free-ranging" is something of a misnomer. They don't have a cable to hinder their movement, but they're limited to the area seeded with transmitters (however, that area may be MUCH larger than the designated patrol area of a cable-connected drone). If they wander outside their area, they lose their carrier signal, get disconnected from the network, and instantly go stupid. A lot of free-ranging drones have commands burned into their dog-brains to turn back if they get too close to the edge of the free-ranging zone.
◗ Cutty Sark

MAGICAL COUNTERMEASURES

Being underwater doesn't affect magic one fragging bit, other than making it hard to recite chants while sucking on a scuba air regulator. Aquacologies compensate for limitations on physical security by beefing up on magical security. A lot of magicians make use of spirits and astral projection to provide magical security. Water elementals and nature spirits are virtually *invisible* underwater.

◗ Even though they can't manifest underwater, fire and air elementals are by no means useless. Astral space doesn't care one whit about the local environment, and those types of elementals can still make effective watchdogs, not to mention helping in casting and sustaining combat and detection spells.
◗ The Ancient Mariner

◗ One thing Undertow didn't mention is that a lot of wagemages hate pulling underwater detail. With very few exceptions, most aquacologies are cramped, claustrophobic areas, with hardly any view of the world outside. The stress of day-to-day living is hard enough on the mundanes, so imagine how the magicians must feel. A lot of them actually relish astral patrols, as it gives them the opportunity to get away from the drudgery of living underwater in the meat body. A lot more mages die from astral discorporation in underwater facilities than on the surface, simply because underwater mages are too busy enjoying their freedom to remember to return to their meat bodies.
◗ Nereid@aso.pn.bcl.ct

THE AIR LOCK/DECOMPRESSION CHAMBER

An air lock is any room or chamber that allows water to be pumped in and out, allowing us air breathers to get in and out of the water safely. An air lock also includes decompression equipment, which reduces the ambient pressure back to the normal atmosphere pressure, instead of the high-pressure environment found deep undersea.

◗ Even air chambers open to the water, such as diving bells or underwater submarine bays, need an air lock. The air in the diving bell is using atmospheric pressure to keep water from flooding the chamber, so the air in the chamber is at the same pressure as the undersea environment outside. That means that workers in the bell are just as susceptible to the bends and other decompression hazards as underwater divers
◗ Cutty Sark

Security officers love air locks, because they're the ultimate choke points. The only way in or out of an underwater city is through an air lock, short of breaking through a bulkhead. (And those bulkheads are *tough*, since they have to protect against things like megalodons, krakens, devilfish, and oh yeah, us shadowrunners too.)

◗ Not to mention the need to defend against hydrostatic shock from underwater explosions—a favorite tactic of certain saboteurs.
◗ Aegis

There are two ways to get past an air lock, the easy way and the hard way. The easy way is to blow open the door. Relatively speaking, an air lock's the weakest point in the bulkhead and the easiest to blow through. On the other hand, if you blow through a bulkhead, you open up the compartment behind to the sea, cause a whole lot of collateral damage, and in some cases, destroy the whole underwater base. Acceptable if your mission runs along the lines of "asset liquidation," but out of the question if any degree of subtlety is required.

◗ Also, you can't make a blown air lock "look like an accident." Those things are recessed inward to protect them from attacks by underwater sea creatures (too narrow an opening for them to get a tentacle in), and the doors are as tough as tank armor to begin with, since they have to keep out mega-volumes of seawater.
◗ Gitmo Gus@cmot.cuba.cl

The hard way, on the other hand, is to sleaze past any security measures on the door. And yup, most of the security measures on air lock doors are of the variety shadowrunners are already familiar with: maglocks with keypads, card readers, print scanners, retinal scanners, and so on. Depending on the type of security system in place, you may or may not be in for a break. Some of these systems *can't* operate in a water-filled chamber, so they'll be installed on the inside door of an air lock. You'll be able to get inside, pump out the water, and decompress without any hassle, allowing you to sleaze any security systems without worrying about running out of air.

Of course, you'd better not screw up. If you trip the alarm, security won't deploy any fancy neutralization devices; they'll simply lock out the outer door and reflood the chamber. Eventually you'll either run out of air or succumb to the bends, so all the security teams have to do is wait.

◗ Some facilities won't necessarily flood the air lock, depending on whether they want prisoners afterward for interrogation. If the alarm gets tripped, they'll lock down the air lock and deploy security guards on the inside and outside of the air lock. They'll take their time, too, since air locks are by nature supposed to be tough.
◗ Halibut@nap26.vn.ss.nan

◗ You want to talk about invisible underwater? One word: monowire. The last thing you want to do in some underwater locales is slice off a limb and watch your blood attract the sharks.
◗ Grip

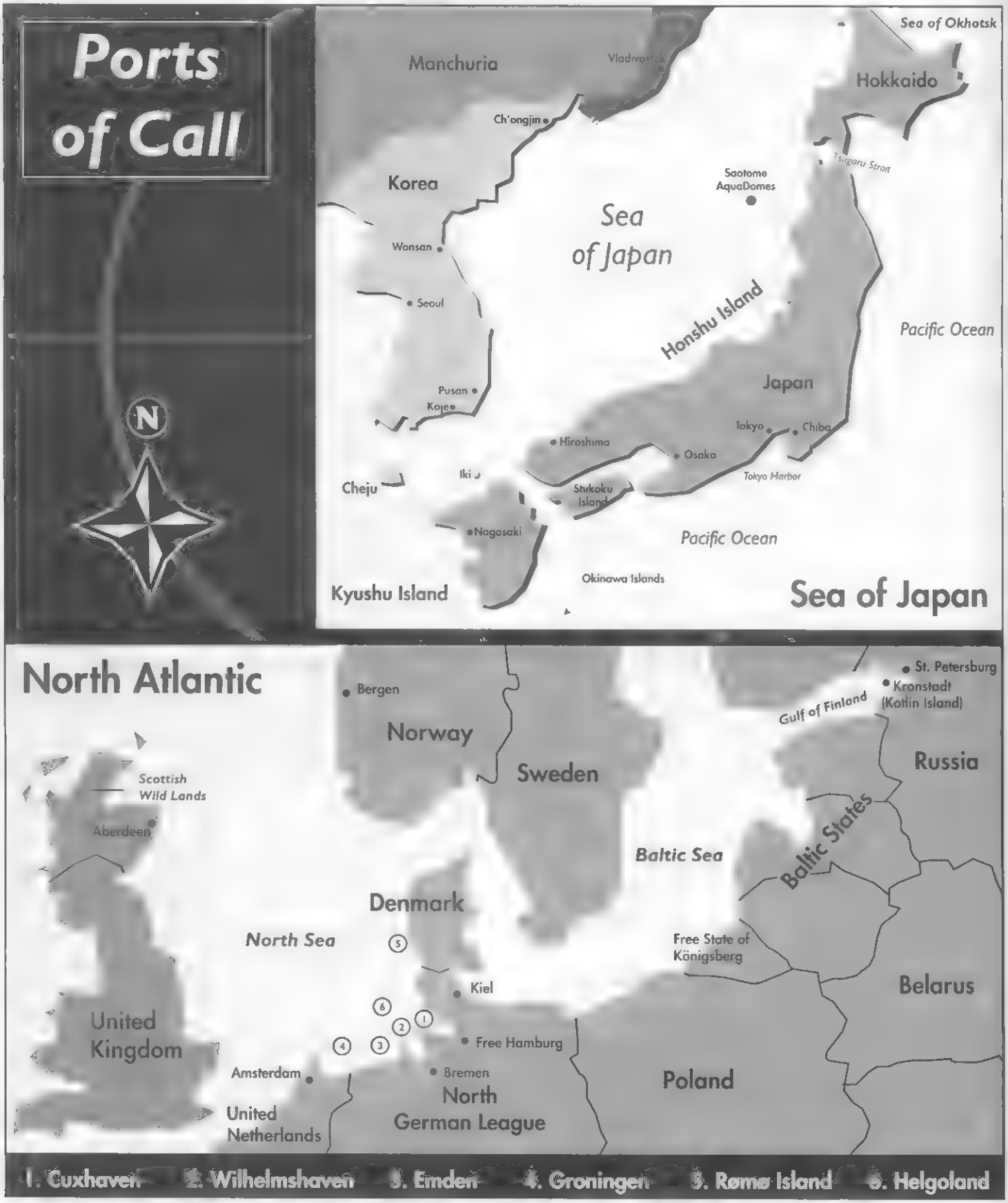
INTERNAL SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS

Okay, so you managed to bypass the security drones, avoid getting eaten by cybersharks, and sleaze the maglocks on the air lock hatches. Are you home free? Not quite.

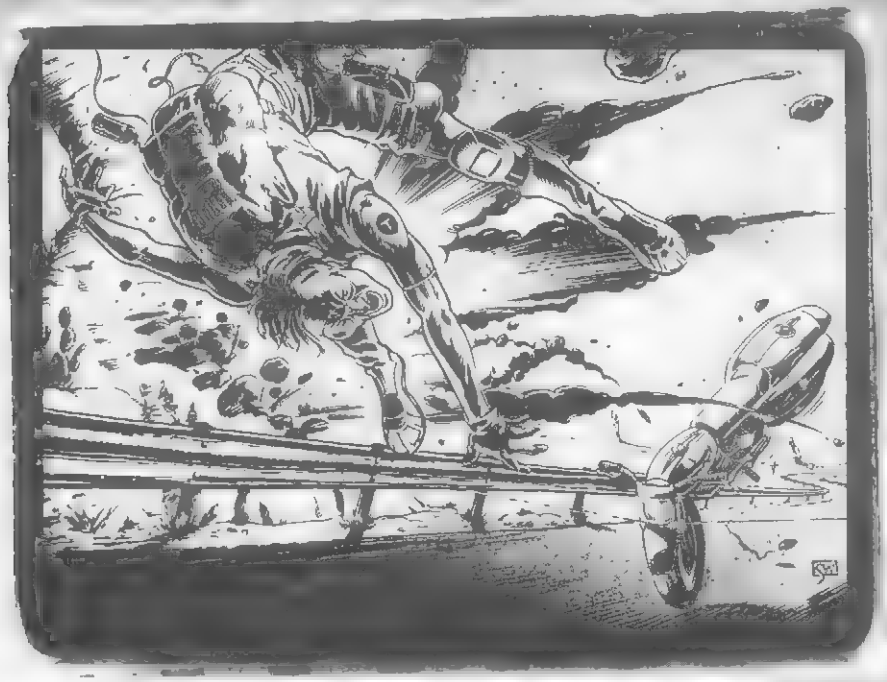
Unlike arcologies on the surface, underwater aquacologies are small tin cans. Space is money, after all, and corps have to make the most out of the least. You can bet your hoop that the corps will use all their familiar tricks inside that they use on the surface, such as patrols, cameras, motion detectors, laser sensors, and so on. Also, because it's a small area, the response time to an alarm is going to be real fragging fast.

Due to the cramped conditions, security armament tends to be on the lighter side. Incendiaries, gas, and smoke are out of the question, since they jeopardize the air supply. Grenades, explosives, and other heavy bang-bangs are also almost never used, because of the chunky salsa effect. APDS and explosive ammo are rarely used, because they don't want hull breaches, flooding, and decompression. Expect to see tasers, flashpaks, netguns, squirts and sliverguns.

◗ A chummer of mine once made an extraction run against a Renraku aquacology offshore of the Philippines. On the way out, he and his chummers had the misfortune of tripping an alarm, which brought a detachment of Red Samurai on them almost immediately. He described the resulting firefight as like being in a knife fight in a telecom booth.
◗ Wu Pi@tsuen.hk


Ports of Call
Sea of Okhotsk
Manchuria
Vladivostok
Hokkaido
Ch'ongjin
Korea
Saotome AquaDomes
Tsugaru Strait
Sea of Japan
Wonsan
Seoul
Honshu Island
Pacific Ocean
Japan
Pusan
Kojo
Tokyo
Chiba
Hiroshima
Osaka
Tokyo Harbor
Iki
Cheju
Shikoku Island
Nagasaki
Pacific Ocean
Okinawa Islands
Kyushu Island
Sea of Japan
N
North Atlantic
Bergen
Norway
St. Petersburg
Kronstadt (Kotlin Island)
Gulf of Finland
Russia
Sweden
Scottish Wild Lands
Aberdeen
Baltic Sea
Baltic States
Denmark
North Sea
Free State of Königsberg
Belarus
Kiel
United Kingdom
Free Hamburg
Amsterdam
Bremen
Poland
North German League
United Netherlands
1. Cuxhaven
2. Wilhelmshaven
3. Emden
4. Groningen
5. Rømø Island
6. Helgoland

SMUGGLING ON LAND



◊ Lately it seems like every fragger and their pet monkey want to pick up some spare change running goods. I invited Yeager, one of the great old smugglers, to fill you in on some major routes. I know you runners are going to want to add your special touch, but I decided to keep this one clean—no one wants to read a road map that's been written all over.

◊ Captain Chaos

Transmitted on 2 July 2059, at 10:45:45 (EST)

SEATTLE TO NEW ORLEANS

This is the big boy, the Route 66 of the smuggler trade. Probably the route most traveled by anybody and everybody bringing something illegal into and out of North America. You can spin off this trip to hit every city in the western half of North America, though most follow two main routes—the Northern and the Southern. Both start in Seattle, and they converge in St. Louis before heading on down to that den of iniquity, New Orleans. Ride with me, chummers, as we hit the old road cruisin' from the Pacific Rim to the Gulf of Mexico.

THE NORTHERN ROUTE

Name: From Seattle to St. Louis it's called the Big Sky. From St. Louis to Seattle it's called the Long Weekend.

The Basic Route: Seattle, Spokane, then—hold your breath—Minneapolis. (Yeah, that's about half a continent, but there ain't many folks living out there.) Then follow the Mississippi River down to St. Louis. The cities you choose to stop in are up to you. Along the Mississippi the stops are plentiful, and with the right contacts you can sell anything anywhere.

Secret Stops: For you rooks out there, bring your own tools, food, water and entertainment, because once you leave Seattle (or Minneapolis, going the other way) you won't find much of

anything to look at, see or do. Trust me, you don't want to stop and ask around for directions in the middle of the Sioux Nation. Near Bismarck, North Dakota, is the last (or first) good stop a rigger can find in the UCAS. Follow the Missouri River north along the Sioux/UCAS border until it splits with the Yellowstone. There's a rigger drop stop there for repairs and such, called Lady Jane's. She was one of the first to use the Northern route with a t-bird. Jane set up shop here after her bird got smoked by a Sioux patrol (check out the "carcass"—it's still out back). She was a decent rigger, but she's an even better mechanic. She works strictly on the barter system, so bring something extra along to pay for the work you need done. I usually bring a box of real chocolate, any vehicle parts I can get my hands on, and an extra ten gallons of fuel.

Once you're in the UCAS, stop where you want. If your cred's good, somebody will fix you up. Be prepared to pay higher prices if the shop you're using suspects you're a smuggler. I try to remember to bring along something that the hicks in the sticks don't have ... elf porno, megacorporate 'ware of all types, combat biker t-shirts, the works. And for some reason, those stupid Aztechnology hats go over great. Trust me, this kind of stuff keeps them quiet and happy. What more can you ask for?

The Goodies: PacRim exotic goods, magical trinkets and telesma, people desperate to avoid the NAN, or just things that are best moved under a low profile, such as one-of-a-kind corp items (prototypes, specially bred watchcritters, high-profile suits, ultrasecret research)—those go south to NO. On your way north, the nuyen is in high-tax Carib goods, African and South American magical gewgaws, chemical mindbenders from the Ghost Cartels. Hauling for the Cascade orks is a profitable gig, because they mine and transport uranium, but it's also a dangerous gig, because they mine and transport uranium. The Cascades also make good contacts in other ways, because they have access to GPS-grade maps and to-the-nanosecond info on the Salish-Shidhe troop movements.

If you don't mind working for the Mafia, the families always have a caravan of goods moving, carrying everything from controlled substances to fenced items and information to kidnap victims—and they still indulge in quite a bit of hijacking, if your entrepreneurial bent lies in that direction.

Difficulty: Easy—as in long, boring periods of nothing through the Great Plains of North America. You never knew land could be so flat. If you skirt the Sioux lands and hit the Algonkian-Manitou Council lands, this route is ultra-cake. Going through the Sioux lands cuts time but ups the danger quotient. The main rule: stay away from any cities in Sioux lands and you should be safe.

The Terrain: Grab a map and study it. Starting in Seattle, you have the NAN forests and hilly terrain until you hit the Rocky Mountains. Past the Rockies it becomes so flat you'll think the horizon is the end of the earth. That lasts until Minneapolis, where you hit the greatest highway a smuggler ever had—the Mississippi River. You can ride the river down if you are float-capable; the natural hills surrounding the river provide great masking for your sensors, limit line of sight and effectively block anything that might be looking for you. Finally, the cities that border the river are plentiful and great places to camp out. (In case you are an ignorant bastich—the Mississippi dumps into New Orleans and the Gulf of Mexico.) The only caution here is that big stretches of this route may be snowed in during the winter months.

Vehicles: If it moves, you can use it to smuggle along this route. Passenger vehicles usually attract less attention but carry less cargo, and so your profit may not actually reflect the time and effort you invested. (But it's worth saying that a trunkload of orichalcum generously rewards whatever time and effort your trip takes—the trick is finding the cargo.) How you decide to run this route really comes down to space and cargo size, because you can use anything that's wheeled, tracked or airborne, and that includes t-birds. If you have a boat, leave it docked someplace along the Mississippi for the trip down to New Orleans. Secure hiding is pretty cheap in the northern hinterlands. Just make sure you winterize the vehicle, or you may need a battery jump 15,000 feet up the side of a mountain. The tendency on this route is to avoid the mil-spec stuff like interceptors, t-birds or VTOLs. While they can do the run in a day or two, they attract too fraggin' much attention from the various border units, while ATVs, cargo trucks and passenger vehicles are usually not worth the patrols' time—there are just too many of them. As long as you don't have autocannons and missile racks on visible turrets, you should be fine.

Best-Known Riggers: So many riggers use this route that to list them all would require a faster cyberdeck and more memory than the good Cap'n is willing to part with. Suffice it to say that everyone runs this route at least once. The biggest players on this route are the Ancients street gang. This is their main pipeline to supply their troops in various cities outside the elven lands. The other big player is the Mafia. They traffic in anything and everything. I've heard of riggers who load up only a quarter of their space in New Orleans and just keep packing more in as they hit every city up the route: Memphis (alcohol), St. Louis (chips), Davenport (with stuff out of Chicago ... right now there ain't much activity there), Minneapolis (Québec-made cyberdecks and electronics and Detroit weapons), to name a few options.

Opposition: Unless you decide to kill everything your sensors pick up, your UCAS run should be quiet and effortless. The biggest problem occurs either very early or very late into the run, when you hit the Sioux Nation. Best suggestion—skirt around their border. Yeah, it ain't exciting, but you live to spend your nuyen. Most of the UCAS military in the region is focused on that border, and both sides spend most of their time running war games to jerk each other around. Give that line in the sand a wide berth to avoid the majority of the military forces. If you get too close, one side or the other may think you're coming in from the wrong side and flame you on general principle. If you absolutely have to cut through Sioux lands, exit UCAS lands into A-M Council lands and enter the Sioux territories from there. The patrols are nil and you should make it well into Sioux lands before you are even detected.

THE NORTHERN SPIN-OFFS

For you rookies out there, Minneapolis offers quite a bit of action as a hub; once you hit there, you can take three different routes: north into Québec, through Green Bay to Detroit (and on to Québec), and the Bug City express into Chicago.

SPIN-OFF NAME: The Igloo.

The Basic Route: Minneapolis to Duluth, then along Lake Superior (or across it) to Thunder Bay in the Algonkian-Manitou Council lands—a den of iniquity unrivaled in the northern wastes. From here, I suggest heading to Waskaganish. It's isolated and their money is just as good, plus Québec doesn't expect smugglers to come in from the north.

Secret Stops: Thunder Bay ain't secret, but you can find everything there from back-up batteries to complete vehicle overhauls. Contacts there can give you names in every two-horse town from TB to Iceland if you need it. The nuyen flows in and out of that port city, so if you can't find a deal when you get there, just wait.

The Goodies: It's guns and cyberdecks and necessities (food, tools, electric blankets, radio parts and such) ... but standard electronics and sat uplinks fetch the most nuyen.

Difficulty: Surprisingly, this route can cause you some big headaches, but not from patrols or border guards. I've seen too many smugglers get stupid and drunk (or is it the other way around?) in Thunder Bay and fall victim to their own idiocy or others' predatory natures, or get caught in really bad winter storms and become rigger-cicles cuz they underestimated mommy nature. Other than that, the route is pretty trouble-free. Even the Québec border is cake to get through that far north.

The Terrain: Two words: frozen tundra. Make sure you and your vehicle can handle it. My suggestion is to go during the summer months. The winter months bring more cash, but the risks and the toll on you and your vehicle are higher.

Vehicles: Any and all VTOLs, t-birds and anything that can be considered an ATV. You can use a boat to cross the Great Lakes, but the Igloo's still a land-based route.

Best-Known Riggers: Nordic Queen and The Purple People Eater have the best connections. Nordic works out of Duluth, and she knows who's doing what to whom in Thunder Bay and can fit you up with anything and everything. Be careful to show her proper respect, because she can shut down your buyers all the way into Québec if you screw her. PPE works out of Minneapolis and has Mafia ties. He's reliable but a bit more bloody than Nordic. Both are always looking for smugglers to make runs for a percentage (a deal that actually makes the runner an impressive chunk of nuyen). They can offer you the help you need and the contacts to get your cash. Both still make an occasional run themselves to make sure their networks are still operating, so don't be surprised if you run into them in the A-M lands.

Opposition: Piracy on the Great Lakes really picked up when Chicago went to the bugs; it's everyone for himself on the boat smuggling front. In every other way, you can be your own worst enemy on this route. Too much partying in Thunder Bay has waylaid too many smugglers to mention. Finally, though the Québec border is less heavily defended, once in Québec you need to deal with their laws and their rules (remember to slot that French linguasoft, mon cher).

SPIN-OFF NAME: Formerly the French Connection, now the Ares Screw.

The Basic Route: Minneapolis to Green Bay (the biggest slice of cake a rigger ever ran), by boat to Detroit (you can drive around the lake, but the time it takes will kill your profits—unless you drive through Chicago, where something else can kill you ...), then from Detroit along Lake Erie and Lake Ontario to Toronto and Ottawa on to Massena, on the New York side of the St. Lawrence Seaway. Massena is a Mafia controlled, owned and operated port within shouting distance of Québec. It's directly across the border from Cornwall, the favorite border crossing spot. Massena sits there like a decadent beacon tempting those isolated Que-burgers—with strip houses, gambling dens and what seems like a million bars. But take your job seriously; the Québec border patrol knows that this gaudy stop is like a bright light in their eyes, blinding them to the smuggling operations. From Massena, you need to bust the Québec wall at Cornwall. If you have the guts, you can then run the most patrolled and heavily secured section of Québec, from Montreal to Québec City.

Secret Stops: In addition to Massena, where you can find and do everything, the UCAS side is generally pretty accommodating. If you get into trouble while in Québec, there's a must-stop place controlled by the True Canadians just outside Montreal. It's called Haven, and the riggers there are some of the best in Québec. They have excellent repair facilities and are willing to barter goods for repairs or new vehicles. If you're having trouble with your ride, call LaLux@qu/zip/zap/zone. The address only works inside the Québec RTG, but it can be used for vid messaging and Matrix contact. Alternately, the Detroit Don (Don "The Greek" Roland) keeps his made men busy all along the route and has safehouses and warehouses in Toronto and Ottawa.

The Goodies: Weapons (specifically Ares), cheap-end electronics and Matrix programs, opulent vices (simchips, drugs, exotica), telesma and critters that can be sold either dead or alive for bounty are all popular items inside the closed Q. European-style goods of all kinds, Cross Technology items, and extractions can get you nuyen on the rebound.

Difficulty: It's mostly a cakewalk in the UCAS until the border, then it's drek hot. The border along the St. Lawrence Seaway is a gauntlet, and having even impeccable forged papers means nothing. The Québec response to smugglers is hard, fast and deadly. They don't care if you have chips, guns, or ice cream—if you're crossing the border illegally, you are a target. Working for the

Mafia makes things a whole lot easier. The mob earns its cut in this town, because it has more ways to get past the border than a troll has warts. Their networks of spies, plants and contacts in the area rival Lofwyr's. But don't be surprised if they give you a window of less than 15 minutes to make the crossing, because they time it that exactly. And even if you get across, the ride into Québec City is still paranoia-ville.

The Terrain: It depends how you go. The trip from Minneapolis to Green Bay is smooth as a baby elf's rear end. If you can't make that run, sell your control rig and become a decker or some other useless appendage to society. If you take the Great Lakes, beware the inland seas' ferocity and on-a-dime changes of weather and temperament. I've seen seasoned ocean pirates quake in fear in the face of a Lake Superior squall or a Lake Michigan rainstorm. Once in Detroit, you can go by land through Toronto and Ottawa—the route is somewhat hilly but uneventful. You can also continue by water right up the St. Lawrence. On the New York side of the Seaway near the border, there are lots of inlets that allow you good hiding if you can't warehouse with the Greek's boys.

Vehicles: Along this route by land, hovercraft or regular vehicles work. T-birds usually bring unwanted attention. Boats navigate this area the best, until you hit the border (you don't want to travel in Québec by boat—the number of times you'll be stopped to have your ship's records checked is ultra-annoying). My suggestion: link up with a supplier in Massena and just sell there. The cut may not be very good, but it saves you on securing land vehicles in Québec. Going into Québec can cause all kinds of havoc—if you want to do that, use the route that brings you in from the north.

Best-Known Riggers: The Detroit Mafia owns this route, although Knight's anti-Cross stance has upped the ante. More teams are trying to make it across, but the success rate is poor unless you work with the mob. Pass a percentage their way and they can lay out a safe route, the best stops and even some contacts on the other side. Get caught, though, and they never heard of you.

Opposition: The only trouble on the first part of the trip is the Great Lakes pirates. If you take that route, you better hire extra muscles, cuz the pirates there don't take the "I'm one of you guys—it's us against The Man" arguments. You have the goods, they don't. It's basic economics ... .

Beyond those rascals, the opposition falls into two camps: the Québec border patrol, and whoever else is smuggling at the same time. If you are working with the Mafia, that means you really only have to face independents hired by Ares. Trust me—they make good cannon fodder and an even better distraction for the border patrols. You can probably use them as cover. The border patrol along the Seaway uses European-produced versions of the GMC Riverine, as well as a hovertruck that seems to be a direct rip-off of the Lone Star Swat hovertruck. Air in this area is patrolled by just about anything they can get from Europe, and they keep their eagle eyes trained on the UCAS. On land, it seems they prefer the Appaloosa Light Scout or some variant, as well as the Chrysler Nissan Patrol-1. The cop riggers aren't much better than your average shadowrunner, but they don't hesitate to call in the military at the first sign of any resistance—so if you are outrunning the local constable, you could suddenly be hounded by some well-armed Yellowjackets or Wasps.

If you are running against the mob ... well, I'll leave it up to you to imagine what might happen. They have long arms and even longer memories.

SPIN-OFF NAME: It was once called the Godfather; now it's called the Bug Zapper.

The Basic Route: Minneapolis to Chicago (there's stops in between, but if you can't make it in one jaunt, you should just suck on your exhaust).

Secret Stops: Eau Claire and the Wisconsin Dells have many hidey-holes, back-mountain turns, and enclaves of anti-establishment feeling that make great hide-outs, but the capper is Madison. If the heat is on and you need a place to cool off, this is it—great beer (that's right, real beer!), college chicas or boytoys, and the most liberal environment in the UCAS. Even metavariants have found the place friendly. They have very popular Infected Studies classes and active subspecies rights activists, so don't be surprised to find a sasquatch, vampire or ghoul at the local watering hole. I even heard they gave a "Seat in Waiting" (whatever that means) to Tamir Grey, the ghoul from Chicago. The trade isn't so hot, as they don't have much nuyen, but with all the other freaks there, you can hide out without getting seen.

Before Madison, Tomah is your stop for a little R&R. Just under the halfway point, near where old Route 90 meets I-94, Tomah has just what the good smuggler needs to get by for a few days. Tomah is also a hot stop to pick up some mil-spec cargo from nearby Fort McCoy. The greasy palms inside don't really part with any big boom booms, but they do pass out some pretty nova comm gear along with repair kits and medical supplies. Several of the quartermasters are as crooked as a boxer's nose, and they're in tight with the Eau Claire Triads and Hmong Gangs.

Another great place to stop is Merv's House of Sin, just before the Illinois border. Merv's is the friggin' porn HQ of the Midwest. Nearly every device, toy, sim, and other item of vice can be found there. Thanks to a string of conservative governors in Wisconsin, most adult stores went out of business, which means you can make buckets of nuyen trading in-state. But the *real* reason to go is that the gear you pick up at Merv's will move faster in the CZ than anything else you're carrying.

The Goodies: In Bug City, anything moves, from food to the latest porn. The gangs and warlords inside the CZ will take anything. Any-fraggin'-thing. If you aren't careful, they'll buy your organs for the price of a few bullets. Maybe outside the CZ you can't sell a sandwich to a starving man, but inside the wall, they'll treat you like Santa.

There ain't much to smuggle out anymore except people, if you are into that, although there is some market for "authentic Bug City souvenirs." Supposedly mages and such think the rocks and bricks and kibble from inside the wall are now telesma. I don't buy it, but they do—at good rates.

Difficulty: This was the slickest of routes until the mob got caught inside the CZ. It's a bit lonely now, with many shadowfolk too scared to go near the place. But since Ares packed up and left, it's a lot easier to get inside the wall and make a deal. Of course, those outside the wall will stop you if they can, and those inside will screw you. Prepare yourself, and bring back-up. And don't forget the rumors about some bugs still crawling around.

The Terrain: The roads are good and the hills throughout Wisconsin are actually pretty. Hey, what can I say, I appreciate natural beauty.

Vehicles: You can use what you want, but I'd stick with heavy trucks loaded with hidden weapons. You'll need 'em in the CZ. Blasting a LAV down I-94 will only get you in BIG trouble. You need to stay chill and inconspicuous through the suburbs and anywhere near O'Hare Airport. The government still controls that area, and the airport is still a big military hub. You look like you might possibly be a terrorist or a bug and you won't even know what hit you. So the more your truck actually looks like a truck, and not a Rolling Artillery of Doom, the better.

Best-Known Riggers: No one really runs this route anymore. It's sad, cuz it was the big one with the big money. All routes went through Chicago cuz the mob paid real well for anything. They had a whole network strung up, all the way down to New Orleans. But when the Don disappeared behind the Containment wall, the infrastructure fell apart and everyone rerouted to steer clear of the mess. Coming into Chicago used to be great: the skyline, the big twelve-lane interstate highway right through the middle of the city, it would send chills down your spine. The money was sweet, and so were the free simchips and starlets the mob fixed you up with. Now you sell porn to gangs and hope you escape with your life. Damn bugs.

Opposition: As long as your vehicle isn't sporting any Vindicators, the UCAS military shouldn't be a problem at all. The Milwaukee mob is trying to relocate the big trade through their town, as well as open some routes into the CZ. They're as stupid as they are ineffective, and Don "The Greek" Roland in Detroit has been "promoting" the Green Bay route so that Milwaukee's McCaskill family gets drek. So far it's working. Other than that, you've got the CZ and its denizens. I'll leave that to your imagination.

THE SOUTHERN ROUTE

Name: The Big Dance.

The Basic Route: Head out from Seattle to Spokane. Most smugglers prefer to avoid Sioux lands, so stay in the Salish-Shidhe down to Idaho Falls. Most riggers then make a straight drive through the Ute to Denver. A few stop off in Salt Lake City, but the stuff we tend to carry ain't the highest priority with the tribals

or the Mormons. Once in Denver, you have to run the toughest stretch of Sioux-patrolled area in existence: the Rocky Mountain corridor to UCAS lands. If you ain't got the stomach for that, go south into Pueblo—they can be as feisty as the Sioux, but they're less tenacious. Either way, the goal is to arrive in the good old Nebraska bread box in one piece (you know you've arrived when everyone stops shooting at you). From that point, head on to Wichita and then into St. Louis and New Orleans.

Stay away—oh God, stay away—from Omaha. You will die. Painfully. Omaha is the home of NORAD. They watch out for nukes, and they're the forward base for the UCAS on the NAN front. They usually have AWACs in the air and more ECCM and ECD stuff than God himself on a good day. They also test their pilots out there, and the last thing you need is a twitchy airjock eager to please his superiors by bagging himself a bogey. I don't even go to Kansas City because it's too damn close.

Secret Stops: Daniel in Sioux lands (right on the Green River) and Maybell in Ute lands (on the Yampa River near the Little Snake River) are nice little towns (not people) that are a great place to break for a couple of hours while the patrols cool down. Daniel is reported to be the best, an odd fact considering it's in Sioux territory. Rumor is that a faction in the Sioux guvmint loves the smuggler trade because it wears down the stick-up-their-hoop chiefs who control everything. They allegedly set up and run the spot. Me, I don't trust it. Watching Sioux flybys and patrols while I nurse a drink in their territory freaks me out. But I know a bunch of riggers who swear by this place.

For me, Maybell is the best, mainly because you can get a great read on the rest of the run, as far as military actions and weather are concerned. It's full of "survivalists"—loonies who think the Awakening was only the beginning and are waiting for the big event. Whatever. All I care about is that their inside info on the Sioux patrols can cut time off my trip, and that's nuyen. They'll trade info for anything you have. I'll warn you, don't screw them or you're likely to end up getting lynched. I've seen 'em do it.

I lied before. You really know you're in UCAS territory when you hit the Last Chance Chicken Roost. It's at the outermost zone of interdiction of the UCAS. It's run by Denver Virgin (who isn't) and Chief Flies At Night, an Owl shaman. If you're not antisocial streetscum, they'll treat you like family. Drek, don't be surprised if they take your picture and put it on the wall. I recommend checking out the message board they keep for riggers to keep in touch (yeah, we got friends and family too). If they hear you didn't make a run and got yourself killed, they take your picture and place it over the bar where a "Last of the Heroes" sign hangs. They say it's a tradition from the test pilot days of last century. I have no idea if it's true or not, but it's a nice little sentiment. Each day at sundown, when the Chief gets up, they have a drink on the house and a toast to those pictured behind the bar. On a practical note, they have a crew of topnotch mechanics and high-quality parts from Denver suppliers, including the SOTA toys you want or need.

The Goodies: This route is a bit different because it's like millions of smaller routes added together. First you have NAN lands that will accept any urban item from electronics to weapons to sim chips and BTLs—all the stuff that you would never take to New Orleans because they have it in buckets. I've even made a profit selling blank optical chips. On the way you can load up on telesma and other NAN rarities, including pelts and live paracritters.

Like the Northern route, if you can take smaller cargoes and fill the rest of your vehicle as you go, you should be able to make a killing on the side.

Denver is landlocked and isolated, so if it's made anywhere else, you can sell it here. The NAN guvmints as a whole aren't too keen on their heritage being smuggled out, but there's big nuyen to be made from poser natives in other countries. The CAS or UCAS zones of Denver are good places to unload weapons, high-tech luxury items, cyberdecks and sims, or any other PacRim goods that are hard to get. If you're coming from New Orleans, you should be able to sell whatever you have in Denver, the more exotic the better.

Difficulty: Next to the Aztlan run, this is the single most difficult run in North America. You travel from wilderness to mountains to more mountains, then enter a city divided among six countries, head out through foothills, and finally traverse long stretches of the Great Plains. I'd say leave this one to the pros, although they say you haven't truly earned your wings until you get lucky at the Big Dance.

The Terrain: This time, I have one word for you: G-fraggin'-PS. Get one and sleep with it for a week until you trust it with your life, because this baby is the only thing that will keep you sane and get you in and out of Denver alive. The mountains will screw with your sensors, and the Sioux, UCAS, and Pueblo will jam anything more powerful than a cybereye, so a GPS is your only way in and out of the Spine of North America. Besides mountains, you will encounter every sort of weather and nearly every kind of terrain possible. By the way, if you've never seen it before, be careful—it's gorgeous out there. More than one rigger has been contemplating the scenery and done what the UCAS Aviation Department calls "a controlled flight into terrain."

Vehicles: T-birds all the way. The Denver route is where t-bird smuggling began and where it flourishes. The various nations like to constantly develop new ways to counter t-birds, but the shadow community always adapts and invents a bypass. Since this route is effectively roadless, the t-bird is the way to go. Some have tried smaller planes or VTOLs, but they just garner too much attention. The Sioux and UCAS have a definite paranoia about things in the air, and in Denver six nations maintain air defense—it couldn't be sealed up any tighter and still be aboveground.

The t-bird can not only make the trip but survive it as well—they are fast enough, tough enough, and roomy enough to make the trip in one piece.

Best-Known Riggers: This route was started by indies, and it remains the most independent. There's enough biz to keep everyone happy. With Denver all split up it's easy to specialize—CAS loot, NAN drops, UCAS Mafia connections, and so forth. Most of the old-timers like myself have names based on old fighter pilots

and daredevils. The oldest rigger on the route is Eddie R. He took the name of Eddie Richenbacher, American Ace of Aces in World War I. This guy can run rings around any t-birder I've ever seen. When he's not smuggling, he can be found in Denver at the Urban Brawl or Combat Biker games. On occasion he's set up "t-bird races" from Denver to other locations as a way to test himself and others. He doesn't always win, but he always finishes. Another hotshot is Right Stuff, an ork from Ute country. Count yourself lucky if you ever catch a ride with him through Ute—he's got hide-outs and secret layovers all through the country. Every place he lands he has a relative, making a trip with him seem like a family reunion. If you want more names, check out the board at the Last Chance Chicken Roost. They can hook you up with anyone if you've got the time.

Opposition: In order to make sure you've got this down, I'll run through the list: Don't crash in the mountains, stay away from Omaha, and run like hell from the Sioux cuz they'll hunt you down like a dog. Other than that, don't sweat about other riggers or the Mafia or rivals like that. Worry about getting in and out of Denver. Six twitchy militaries stare at each other over those walls. Forget that drek about them ostensibly being private security forces—they have mil-spec equipment and training, and they're tired of jammers running over their fences. Luckily, they usually avoid using the big toys. Not that they're worried about overkill—they love overkill—but if they start maneuvering their forces and hammering away and causing all sorts of mayhem and collateral damage, then it's all too likely some hostile unit will "misinterpret" their actions and mobilize in return. No one, repeat no one, wants a Denver shoot-out. They say (and I'll leave it to your imagination who "they" are) that Denver is the second-most-secure border in North America, trailing behind Texas-Aztlan and just above Tir Tairngire. But when you toss in the number of players and Denver's small size, I'm confident that it's the hardest place to smuggle into in all of North America.

ST. LOUIS TO NEW ORLEANS

Name: The Gauntlet, sometimes referred to as the Throat.

The Basic Route: Both the Northern and Southern routes from Seattle converge on St. Louis. Since Chicago shut down, St. Louis has become something of a rigger hangout. Now, pay attention, because this route is exceedingly complex: start in St. Louis and follow the Mississippi River down to New Orleans. By land, boat or air. Got it?

Secret Stops: Where the Mississippi River meets the Arkansas River is a series of barges lashed together (between four and ten). You may need to search because they are rarely in the same place twice. This little haven is called the Family Inn, and much like Last Chance Chicken Roost, it's a smuggler hideaway. They usually have dry-dock access and mechanics on staff. They cost more (usually 10 to 25 percent more than street) and aren't equipped to handle anything major, but they are fast and quiet, and they can jury-rig anything to make it last until you get to your destination. They can do more with sheet metal and duct tape than any humans I've ever seen. The one piece of info I can't give you is who owns the place—I have no idea, nor do any of the smugglers I hang with. In fact, I rarely see the same people working there twice. But in this biz, sometimes not knowing is twice as good as knowing.

The Goodies: You can find anything being smuggled on this route, whether it originates in the Caribbean League, Seattle, Japan, Québec or the NAN. This is the main pipeline into and out of North America.

Difficulty: It depends. The land routes are full of cities, burgs and hamlets all filled with local law enforcement who can be more annoying than a Mobmaster full of Knight Errant's elite soldiers. These local cops are kings of their territory, and they have real long memories. I know plenty of smugglers who prefer the water lanes just to stay out of their way.

The Mississippi, the old Muddy, is the main artery of North America—everybody uses it. You can see reconditioned pleasure boats that look as if they sailed out of the 1800s next to barges so big you'd think that they were shipping Caribbean islands whole. If you keep yourself clean, either route is cake. I recommend subtlety, as the CAS and UCAS are pretty damn friendly along this border and the CAS is very relaxed about security. One screw-up along the river, however, and it don't matter if you're Dunkelzahn passing out million-nuyen bills—every man, woman, child, and everything in between will get behind a manhunt for your sorry hide. They *will* find you and they *will* catch you and you *will* pay. If you find yourself in that kind of situation, burn rubber out of the CAS, ASAP. Even smugglers will turn you in to turn down the heat.

The Terrain: The Mississippi River route is, well, a river, at least until you hit the swamps surrounding New Orleans. I have to confess that the first time I saw a behemoth raise its head and body out of the swamps surrounding the lower Mississippi, I nearly leaped out of my skin. I've seen big—my guide was a huge 250 kilogram troll. But this thing was so big it could've eaten the troll and still had room for my entire boat. Never underestimate what the Awakening has done.

On land, everyone has a favorite route. Some stick real close to the hills that surround the river in order to cut down on getting spotted. Others take the scenic route and drive the roads down to New Orleans, stopping off in the bars, strip clubs, and other cultural attractions.

Vehicles: The land route is mostly ATVs, although bigger cargo haulers will also work. T-birds make the CAS nervous, especially if your t-bird has a signature that looks like anything Aztlan (which, by the way, most of them do). Just about any boat will do on the river—just don't be conspicuous.

Best-Known Riggers: Everyone uses this route, so there's lots of chaff, but the most colorful rigger is definitely Huck Finn. Huck runs a "legitimate" pleasure boat, the *Grand Old Dame*, a big old riverboat that looks very anachronistic but is more SOTA than you might expect. Everything can happen on his little enterprise and

usually does—gambling, "companionship," costumed play-acting, ante-bellum balls … . Ol' Huck got the down payment for his little enterprise from smuggling, but there's some question as to whether he's left that life behind. Personally, I don't care, but if he's smuggling on that center of attention, my hat's off to the smoothest operator in North America.

Opposition: St. Louis was caught unprepared for the amount of smuggling that would go through its Arch when Chicago went offline. Smalltime hoods and runts came to wield enormous power overnight. Most of them became the first casualties, but the ones who deposed them were stronger but not necessarily smarter. This means that St. Louis is wide-open: smugglers steal from other smugglers, gangs harass the buyers and the sellers, fixers demand payment up-front or will deal with only their own hired staff. It's a mess, and until someone comes in and cleans house (and then scrapes all the blood off the streets afterward), it will remain a mess. Who'da thunk I would wish for Mafia control!

The CAS is usually pretty cool on the river. It's too important to keep the lanes open and the legitimate goods flowing. As long as you look like you belong, there ain't no problem.

INTO AZTLAN

While this route is actually a subroute from Denver, as it's the single most dangerous route in North America, it gets its own section.

Name: The End Run.

The Basic Route: Start in Denver and go south through the Pueblo Corporate Council Lands and Pueblo City itself down to Santa Fe. Not too hard, right? Now head southeast to San Angelo, Texas, in the CAS. Continue southeast until you hit the war zone known as Austin. Simply bust the border of the most paranoid nation on God's green earth and head for San Antonio, and from there set the vehicle on a direct route for these cities in this order: Monterrey, Querétaro, Tenochtitlan and Antanzio. See? Real easy.

Alternately, avoid Austin altogether and just make a run on the Aztlan border from anywhere in the CAS or Pueblo. Near San Angelo is not a bad spot. Just make sure you have a destination in mind, cuz you don't want to be skipping carefree through the Aztlan countryside.

Secret Stops: Write these down, put their locations into your GPS, tattoo them on your arm, carry their location on a series of memory chips. Without stops at these places, your survival odds go way down.

The Midnight Caverns are located in one of the deep canyons south of Pueblo. It's a natural cave formation that has been adapted for use by the smugglers who frequent this route. There is an extensive vehicle maintenance facility here, with no shortage of spare parts and new toys being brought in from Pueblo and Denver. The Caverns are renowned for their ace mechanic, a dwarf named Barkley.

Castle Creek is a small encampment located midway between San Angelo and Austin, near the CAS-Aztlan border. It's a ramshackle community of smugglers, mechanics and wannabes. Castle's pride and joy, though, is the cadre of wiz-hot deckers who use a sophisticated satellite uplink system to eavesdrop on Aztlan border patrol communications. They've got an abundance of military surplus equipment available here, courtesy of the camp leader, Colonel Dwane Markinson, retired CAS Army. Markinson uses his contacts in the military to pull strings and get his people what they need. You need them to get your hoop over the border.

I've heard some buzz that the Azzies have tried to flatten Castle Creek on more than one occasion, but the CAS military stepped in at just the right time. Makes you wonder, eh?

Antanzio is an actual city—the gateway to the Yucatan and the rebels fighting there. In most cases, unless you are offered a bizillion nuyen, this is as far as most gringo smugglers ever really go. This town is just under a hundred clicks south of Tenochtitlan. Antanzio nearly became a ghost town a few years ago, when the Aztlan government tried to wipe it off the face of the earth. Today you will find no mention of the city on any official Aztlan maps, even though a few hundred people live there.

The Goodies: From the north to the south the goods in order of importance are: weapons, cyberdecks and programs, weapons, military surplus gear (any type, including weapons), covert operatives looking for a war to fight (especially if they have weapons), simchips, and finally, more weapons. The return route is less heavy. Normally it's refugees, natural drugs, telesma and other magical goods or information, electronics, aquaculture, and any information from Aztechnology HQ. Lately, blood mages have become a hot import, if you can keep them "alive."

Difficulty: I'd rather go a fifteen-round bout against Lofwyr with both hands tied behind my back. It's three thousand kilometers, across four nations, the majority of the route in Aztlan itself. You know, Aztlan: feathered serpents, blood magic, human sacrifices, and a military that believes in the adage shoot first and shoot again (they don't ask questions—they don't care about the answers). Always bring a mage with you. Always. In fact, bring several. He, she or it will save your hoop in more ways than one. If you don't know one, hire one. This is vital.

The Terrain: Start in the Rockies, where the biggest challenge is knowing a route through the mountains that doesn't involve crashing into one. Further south, there's the bleak desert and scrub plains of the Pueblo Council and the CAS state of Texas. Then there's no man's land, mined and fenced. Once in Aztlan, you go from open desert to plains to mountains as you head south. If you keep going, you'll even hit rain forest.

Vehicles: T-birds are the weapon of choice. Other LAVs can be used, but you'd better have ECCM and ECD at SOTA levels. T-birds at least can attempt to fly under the radar nets (assuming you don't run into a mobile radar truck), while most other birds are just flying deathtraps if you find yourself in a dogfight.

Best-Known Riggers: I flew this route once. I'll never do it again. Others, though (and I think they may have brain damage), have

made careers out of this route. One name you might hear is Rapier, a gal with one kick-ass t-bird. Her crew is called Rapier's Touch, and features Ryan Blanchard (gunner and tactician), Pete Gordani (rigger) and Krista Freid (magical support). I saw them at the Last Chance Chicken Roost about a year ago on a little R&R. Nice folk and good smugglers. They usually handle weapons and secrets, and their contacts in Tenochtitlan are second to none. There's also the Nightwind Brothers, Strider and Chase, two Amerinds who specialize in smuggling people across the Aztlan border in their converted Aguilar attack chopper. For an additional fee (a very, very big fee), they'll actually venture deep into the Yucatan for extractions or drop-offs.

Opposition: The Pueblo-CAS border is pretty smooth. As long as you stay rural and away from Aztlan when you cross it, everything should be cool. Then you have what may be the most dangerous border crossing in the world. The CAS-Aztlan no man's land around Austin. It's mined. It's patrolled. Both sides are on constant military alert. And your job is to sneak through. Actually, you will never sneak through—you will encounter an Azzie patrol of some kind. You will fight, and hopefully you'll survive. Once inside Aztlan, go full bore.

So, why run near Austin? Good question. The primary reason is because there's more intel available on Azzie patrols and schedules in that area, and if the Azzies come gunning for you, the CAS is more than willing to shoot at any Azzies crossing the line. The CAS troops love slottin' the Azzies off, and vice versa. I've heard some smugglers say that the tense situation there keeps either side from going all out to nail a smuggler—sort of like Denver—because they don't want to trigger an escalation from the other side. But from the reports I've heard of border skirmishes down there recently, I wouldn't trust my life to it.

Of course, the entire Azzie border is nailed shut, so you're going to have problems no matter where you cross. The Pueblo border guards aren't as eager to kill Azzies as the CAS grunts are, but they'll take down any Azzies who cross the line or act threatening. Even if the CAS or Pueblo guards do save your hoop, they'll put you through the customary questioning. Just act sweet and do the "Yes sir, no sir, won't happen again, sir!" routine and you should be fine.

THE REST OF THE ROUTES

The routes above are the big ones, the main arteries full of action and nuyen, with the safety nets of contacts and fixers. But with North America being so divided, goods that grow on trees in one area are all but priceless in another one. That means that the only route that's important to you is the route with the goods on one end and the nuyen on the other. With that in mind, let me give you a handful of others that are chock-full of potential.

The Twister: This route takes you into Texas and is almost always gun-smuggling. Most of the weapons came from Chicago in the old days, funneling guns from Ares and Detroit. Since the bugs ate Chicago, there's still a trickle coming through St. Louis, but entrepreneurs have started bringing in cheap guns from the Carib League to take up the slack.

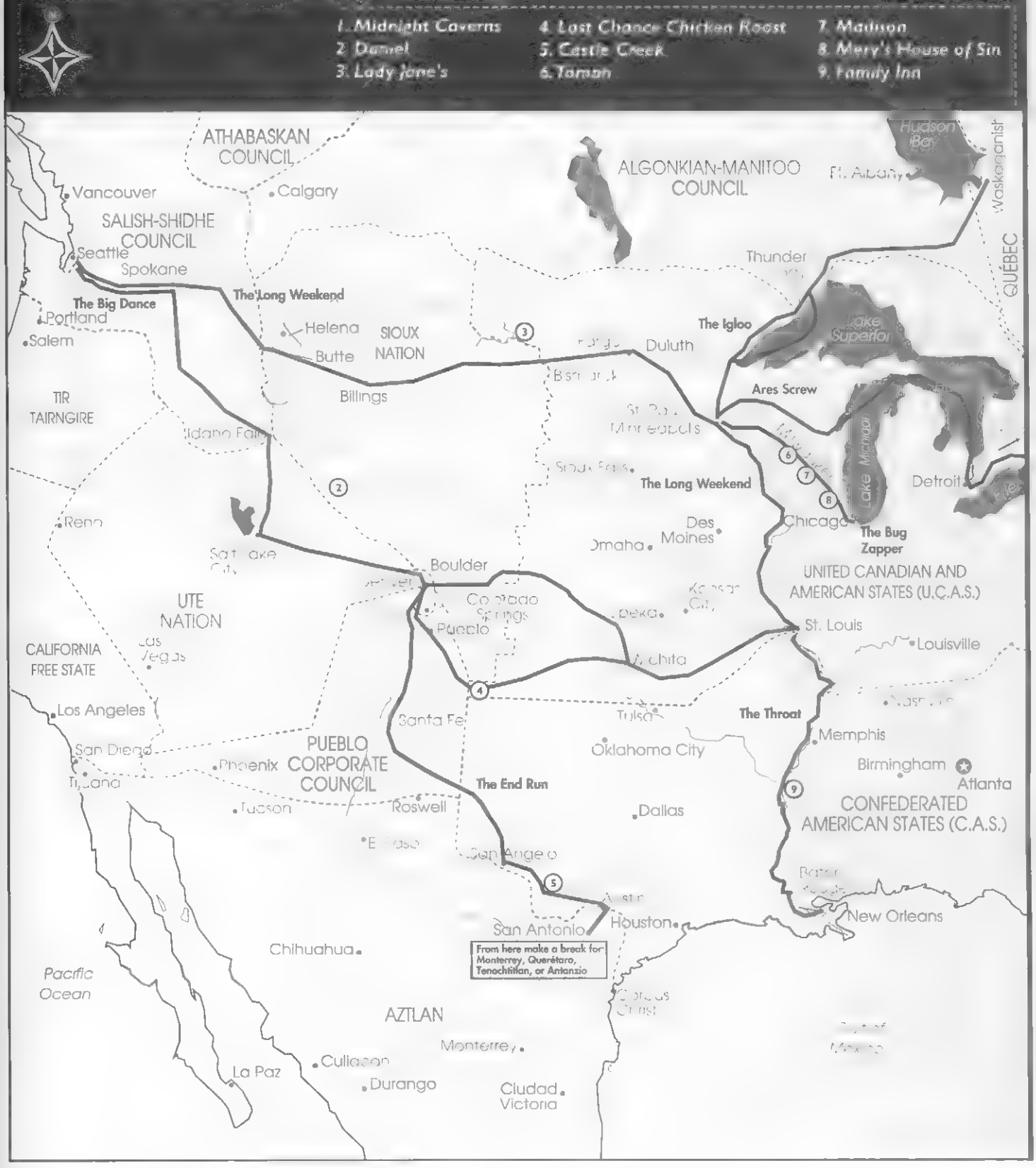
The Daisy Eater: Seattle into Tir Tairngire is probably the third-toughest run for a non-elven metahuman. If you are an elf, then it's easier, but still not cake. Since their border closed, the land-based smuggling routes have all but dried up, although I've heard that the Ancients still have some channels open. The primary method of insertion now is by sea and the various scattered ports. The best bet is to drop stuff off in North Bend or Coos Bay. Bay City works well, too, but the heat is greater there because it's closer to Portland. I know some land smugglers who enter from the east side by Ute land. The Tir border guards are completely ruthless slitches, but there's enough elves in that land who feel stifled and will pay top cred for smuggled goods to make it worth a shot.

Highway 1: Named after the famous coastal highway, this is what West Coasters like myself call any of the routes on the East Coast, as in "I'm running Highway 1 from Cleveland to Atlanta." These are good, protected runs if you don't mind getting paid a salary with somebody else calling the shots. With only two countries to deal with (and very little security), plus hundred-year-old smuggling routes well-established by the Mafia, it can be pretty sweet. There isn't, however, much room for independents, so be careful. Some of the more routine starting points are Detroit (guns), New York (anything), Boston (people and information), Atlanta (chips and cyberware) and any port along the southern coast (drugs, Carib alcohol, and telesma).

Water Sports: Smuggling to CalFree almost always comes down to water. Either the goods come in through a port, or water is what you're hauling. There aren't really any established routes in California, because everything pretty much moves everywhere. Half of the runs I made there involved just going from town to town and selling what I had until it ran out and I left to get more. Obviously, LA is chip central, and you can make huge bucks smuggling those anywhere: to Las Vegas, Denver, Tir, Seattle, and so on. When Chicago went down, the East Coast chip market got real hungry, and LA could barely keep up. Atlanta and New York have since picked up most of the slack, but LA still is the source for much of the rest of the continent. A lot of PacRim goods come in through the Big Sur, and water and telesma from northern CalFree almost always pay well. My main advice here is to steer clear of San Fran and the Bay Area—the Yakuza have that market cinched tight, and they don't appreciate competition.

The Pipeline: Straight north out of Seattle into Tsimshian land and the territory formerly called Alaska (heck, everyone *still* calls it Alaska, even the Amerinds up there). They got oil and fish but not much else—unless, of course, you count the various goods that are still crawling their way over from the Far East. They really crave the decadent lifestyle of us UCASers up there, meaning that alcohol (even the synth stuff), simchips, cyberdecks, and quality food are all good hauls. The biggest payday comes from East Coast stuff and Caribbean goods (especially drugs and alcohol). Bring back precious metals, oil if you can tank it, or else paracritters, telesma, or tribal goodies.

Prime Smuggling Routes



GAME INFORMATION

The following section provides additional information for using New Orleans, Vladivostok, undersea sites and the various smuggler land routes in **Shadowrun** campaigns. For New Orleans and Vladivostok, **Facts at a Glance, Getting In/Out,** and **Cost of Living** present data on demographics, transportation systems, and the cost of goods and services. This section also presents local color elements and sample adventure ideas for campaigns set in each city.

Undersea communities are only now beginning in the world of **Shadowrun.** Spurred on by the incentives in Dunkelzahn's will, companies are increasing their research and mobilizing their resources to try to capture not only the money, but also the prestige and notoriety that such a huge prize will net them. This section provides rules for living and surviving in such underwater sites.

The land routes are just that—routes. They exist because smugglers have found them to be the easiest and fastest routes to payday. The information here includes some specific t-bird rules to be used in addition to the rules presented in **Rigger 2.**

FACTS AT A GLANCE

NEW ORLEANS

Population: 601,100
- Human: 69%
- Elf: 4%
- Dwarf: 4%
- Ork: 15%
- Troll: 5%
- Other: 3%

Regional Telecomm Grid Access: NA/CAS/GU (Green-3/6/8/7/8/8)
Local Telecomm Grid Access: NA/CAS/GU/NO

VLADIVOSTOK

Population: 2,457,000
- Human: 41%
- Elf: 7%
- Dwarf: 12%
  - Common: 9%
  - Korobokuru: 3%
- Ork: 22%
  - Common: 15%
  - Ogre: 2%
  - Oni: 5%
- Troll: 12%
  - Common: 11%
  - Giant: 1%
- Other: 6%

Regional Telecomm Grid Access: AS/RU-US/PRY (Orange-3/6/8/8/6/6)
Local Telecomm Grid Access:
- Vladivostok: AS/RU-US/PRY/VLD
- Russian Pacific Fleet: CLASSIFIED (Red-6/10/10/8/9/6)

GETTING IN/OUT

NEW ORLEANS

One of the premier traffic stops in the Western Hemisphere for smuggling, New Orleans is accessible to every imaginable method of entry, from swamp skimming to modern international airports to the wide lanes of several interstate highways that use the city as a hub.

The myriad of ports in the New Orleans region offer access to both the ocean (via the Caribbean Sea—formerly known as the Gulf of Mexico) as well as the Mississippi River. This allows goods to be taken off giant-sized transoceanic cargo ships and put right onto smaller Mississippi river cargo barges. These port locations are the center of smuggling, theft and even a fair bit of legal trade activity.

For those who want less attention and more private waterways, the swamps that surround New Orleans can offer entry into the city from nearly every angle. The main concern during such entry is the swamp itself. Stories abound of travelers who were lost in the swamp (and what they turned into). An assortment of experienced guides can be hired to navigate the dead ends, bogs and creatures—for a price.

New Orleans can be entered by road from any direction but the south. From the east or west, CAS Interstate 10 runs along the Caribbean Seaboard. This main tourist road is dramatically overcrowded during the summer vacation season, and is a main artery linking New Orleans with Houston and northern Florida. Nearly every CAS interstate merges with 10 at some point and is used by some smugglers as a route into Texas. Interstates 55 and 59 enter New Orleans from the north; I-55 comes directly south from Chicago through St. Louis. Known as the smuggler's aorta, I-55 is a main leg of one of the main land-based vehicle routes to and from Seattle. I-59 connects to New Orleans from the northeast, stretching through Mississippi and Alabama toward Atlanta.

For those who don't want to stray too far from the Mississippi, there is another road option. UCAS/CAS Highway 61 runs parallel to the Mississippi River (on the east side) from St. Louis to Baton Rouge. North of St. Louis it runs on the west side of the river. This winding, bending road is great for keeping a low profile and staying away from the main roads.

New Orleans has an international airport but lacks suborbital access—the city carries too little megacorporate clout to warrant such service. Most suborbital traffic lands in Atlanta or Dallas/Fort Worth and is shuttled to New Orleans.

VLADIVOSTOK

The Port of Vladivostok on Golden Horn Bay is an international port, with ships passing daily to and from Japan, Korea and the Chinese coastal provinces. Transoceanic travel from the Port of Vladivostok connects to North America at Seattle, Vancouver, Anchorage and San Francisco. Additionally, Vladivostok maintains numerous ferry services between the city center and the sprawl on the surrounding islands and Khasan Coast, as well as outlying regions surrounding Amursky Bay and the Bay of Peter the Great.

Vladivostok is the terminus of the Trans-Siberian Railroad, a 9,600-kilometer railroad originating in Moscow. A train departing from Moscow would arrive in Vladivostok, five time zones away, after six days of near-continuous travel. There are also other trains that travel daily from Vladivostok into Mongolia, Korea and northern China.

Vladivostok International Airport handles all air traffic into and out of Vladivostok. The airport can handle conventional and suborbital flights, but it currently lacks the capability to handle semiballistics or spaceplanes. Vladivostok has daily nonstop connections to Anchorage, Seattle and San Francisco, and regularly scheduled flights depart for Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong and Taipei. Security measures are not as technologically advanced as in other countries, but the airport makes up for its lack of technology with regular and heavy patrols of armed UGB Border Guards (often accompanied by trained dogs). Both

Yamatetsu and Federated Boeing have their own dedicated terminals at the airport, and Federated Boeing expects to start a local air commuter service in the very near future.

The road system in the Russian Far East is pathetically undeveloped. One major highway leads out of Vladivostok to the town of Artyom. From there, roads branch out to smaller towns in the vicinity (such as the Khasan Coast, or Dalnegorsk). The only major highway from Artyom leads north through several towns until it intersects with the city of Khabarovsk.

COST OF LIVING

The following lists provide a range of costs for goods and services in New Orleans and Vladivostok. All figures reflect the going black-market prices, which may fluctuate based on what arrived in the latest smuggling shipments. Because player characters are likely buying these goods illegally, the listed prices reflect the realities of the black market and heavy legal restrictions. Costs given represent a percent of the standard Seattle cost.

NEW ORLEANS

Item	Cost
Weapons	80–150
Ammunition	50–100
Explosives	150–200
Accessories	100–150
Armor	100
Security/Communication Devices	100
Survival Gear	100–150
Electronics	40–120*
Cyberware	100–200
Magical Equipment	60–110
Vehicles (air)	120
Vehicles (land)	130
Vehicles (water)	90

* The cheaper costs are for Aztechnology low-end merchandise (products they sell in their own country and don't have to make to any standard because their market is closed).

VLADIVOSTOK

Item	Cost**
Weapons	85–150
Ammunition	85–150
Explosives	85–150
Accessories	85–150
Armor	110–200
Security/Communication Devices	150–250
Survival Gear	50–100
Electronics	75–150
Cyberware	150–250
Magical Equipment	60–90
Vehicles (air)	200
Vehicles (land)	150
Vehicles (water)	80

** The lower end of the percentage is for Russian- or Chinese-made gear or equipment. The higher end price is for smuggled Japanese goods. The exception is Magical Equipment, which is smuggled out of Siberia.

RUNNING IN NEW ORLEANS

The following section provides the gamemaster with specifics for running a campaign in New Orleans, regardless of whether it is part of a smuggling campaign or "regular" shadowrunning. Local color, adventure hooks and rules for the manifestations of magical variations and swamp critters are also described.

THE OPPOSITION

Many of the megacorporations familiar to **Shadowrun** players have a minimal presence in New Orleans. Numerous smaller corporations pick up the slack, especially the petrochemical corporations mentioned in the **Business** section (p. 10) and various entertainment corps. However, important executives from just about any corporation may be in the city for pleasure at any time, which can provide a unique backdrop for staging an extraction or information run against a familiar target on unfamiliar ground.

Many runs in the Crescent City involve smuggling, and the various organized crime syndicates make useful employers and opposition for shadowrunners. A smuggling operation can run afoul of the Mafia, the Zobop, the krewes, or even corporate or government agents. Struggles for control over the various smuggling markets can form the basis for an adventure or a whole campaign. Gamemasters can use material from the **Underworld Sourcebook** and the **Mob War!** adventure set as inspiration for running a criminal-based adventure or series of adventures in New Orleans.

The city also contains magical challenges, from voudoun cults to insect shamans to vampires, ghosts and ghouls. Gamemasters can use the material in the **Smoke and Mirrors** section (p. 24), along with the expanded voudoun and critter information below, to create a magical adventure in the shadows of the Vieux Carré or the dark bayous. Gamemasters interested in a magical campaign (p. 119, **Shadowrun Companion**) can make New Orleans an excellent home city for a group of magical characters.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Gamemasters should take into account at least a few of New Orleans' unique characteristics when running adventures there. The most important are the weather, the background count and the unusual astral phenomena associated with the city.

New Orleans is hot and humid in the summer, with long periods of dampness and rain in the spring and winter. The heat and humidity can be troublesome to characters prone to walking around in heavy armor and long coats, to say nothing of the damage it can do to delicate electronic systems like cyberdecks and other gear. Characters living and working in New Orleans will have to take very good care of their equipment.

The festive nature of New Orleans, combined with the common practice of voudoun in the city and surrounding area, makes background count (p. 89, **Grimoire 2**) a common phenomenon in the Crescent City. The French Quarter has a standard Background Count of 1, and various rituals or celebrations can push the count higher for short periods of time. For example, at the height of

Mardi Gras, the background count can rise as high as 3 in many parts of New Orleans. This phenomenon makes performing astral activities in the city difficult much of the time.

New Orleans is also home to many different types of spirits: not just the nature spirits and elementals commonly known to shadowrunners, but also voudoun loas, ghosts, specters, watcher spirits, insect spirits and various types of free spirits. Some of these are described in the **Critters** section on p. 95. The presence of so many spirits can make astral travel more hazardous than normal. To reflect this, gamemasters can use the Astral Patrolling Table (p. 92, **Grimoire 2**) to determine if a spirit notices an astrally active character at any given time. The average number of dice for the Detection Test should be 4, but the gamemaster can increase or decrease this amount based on desired spirit activity in the area.

Critters are another element that gamemasters can play with, especially for adventures set in the bayous. Gamemasters who have the **Paranormal Animals** books or **Predator & Prey** may wish to add any spirits, reptiles and swamp-dwellers found in those books here.

VOODOO

Voudoun as it is described in the **Awakenings** sourcebook is largely based on the Haitian practice of the tradition. Voudoun in New Orleans has mixed more freely with other magical traditions, particularly the European traditions of the French and Spanish and the local shamanic traditions of the Native Americans. Houngans in New Orleans operate somewhat more openly than those in Haiti and the rest of the Caribbean League, while concealing their most sensitive magical work behind their public façade. There are numerous other "voudoun-like" magical traditions that resulted from the importation of African slaves to the New World. Each of these traditions venerates different loas, many of which are similar to the loas of voudoun. These traditions all use the same rules for loas, possessions and other magic given for voudoun in **Awakenings** (pp. 120–31).

Santeria

Like the slaves taken to French-controlled areas such as Haiti and New Orleans, African slaves in Spanish regions combined their native shamanistic traditions with the Catholicism of their masters to create a tradition that was a synthesis of the two. Santeria comes from the Spanish *santo*, meaning "saint," and is a magico-religious tradition based around the worship of the *Orishas* (loas). Practitioners are called *santeros* and *santeras*. *Yoruba* is the liturgical language, used for speaking spells and rituals (as well as a Centering Skill). The Santeria honfour is referred to as a *casa* (house) and serves much the same function as the honfour in voudoun.

Santeria is practiced in the Caribbean, South America and other areas with a large Hispanic population.

Candomble, Umbanda and Quinbanda

Candomble is a common term for the Brazilian versions of voudoun and Santeria still practiced in parts of Amazonia. Candomble is similar to Santeria, with different names for many of

the Orishas based on Portuguese rather than Spanish. Umbanda is a similar tradition, but has some Hindu and Buddhist influences. There is also a Brazilian tradition known as Quinbanda, which is similar to the Petro tradition described in **Awakenings** (p. 129). It is considered a path of "bad magic" that is mischievous at best and evil at worst.

NEW LOAS

Great Form Loa

Voudoun initiates can attempt to summon great form work loa spirits (work loa are described on p. 127, **Awakenings**) by undergoing an astral quest. In addition to the abilities described for work loa in **Awakenings,** great form work loa have the powers of psychokinesis and manifestation, allowing them to take on physical form. Generally, the form of a work loa of this type is a reflection of one of the greater loa; thus the spirit might appear as Ogoun the Iron Warrior or in the great albino serpent form of Damballah. Uses the statistics of the Spirits of Man to calculate a great form loa's manifest attributes.

Ancestor Spirits

Many shamans in New Orleans have the ability to summon ancestor spirits according to the rules on p. 152, **Cyberpirates.** These spirits often draw on the traditions and beliefs of African magic described in **Cyberpirates,** and gamemasters can use that information to include more "traditionalist" African shamans among the voudoun practitioners in the city, if desired.

CRITTERS

The following are some of the more common Awakened critters that can be found in the area in and around New Orleans. Gamemasters can use them to create adventures in the mysterious bayous and wilderness areas outside the city proper as well as livening up urban-based adventures with a critter encounter or two. The column labeled INT indicates the dice to be rolled and added to the Reaction per standard Initiative rules (p. 79, **SR2**).

Descriptions of the powers wielded by the following critters can be found in **Shadowrun, Second Edition** (pp. 214–19) and **Predator and Prey** (pp. 88–96).

Corpselight

The corpselight (also known as a will-o'-the-wisp) is an astral creature that manifests in the physical world as a glowing sphere of pale light about 0.3 meters in diameter. The corpselight floats a couple of meters above the ground, bobbing and weaving in a seemingly random pattern. Corpselights feed on the Essence of living creatures and often lead them into dangerous situations to heighten their victim's fear and facilitate their Essence Drain.

If fought in astral combat, a corpselight has a Force equal to its current Essence rating.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
5	10	—	—	2	5	(2D6)A	5	+2D6

Attacks: 3M (burning touch), –1 Reach

Powers: Essence Drain, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Manifestation, Movement, Psychokinesis, Regeneration

Weaknesses: Essence Loss

Notes: A corpselight has an Essence rating of 2D6 when first encountered, up to a maximum Essence of 12.

Devil Jack Diamond

Named for a creature belonging to a lumberjack legend, the devil jack diamond is a large fish averaging some 3 meters in length and massing 150 kilograms. It has heavy scales and a broad, flat head equipped with powerful jaws and sharp, tearing teeth. It will attack any creature it encounters in the water. While not feeding, the fish floats near the surface and can easily be mistaken for a log or other piece of floating debris.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT	Attacks
5/3	3 x 5	5	—	1/3	4	6	4	+2D6	8S (bite)

Note: The devil jack diamond has +2 points of armor vs. attacks directed against its back.

Grande Zombie

A grande zombie is a loa zombie (p. 130, **Awakenings**) that escaped the control of its master and became a free spirit (p. 76, **Grimoire 2**). The grande zombie is bound to the body it is in when it becomes free. Grande zombies capable of Sorcery often use illusion spells to disguise the true nature of their physical forms, while using Aura Masking to hide their true nature on the astral plane. A grande zombie has all of the normal abilities of a loa zombie as described in **Awakenings,** except that its effective Force is increased by its Spirit Energy like other free spirits. Grande zombies also receive 1D6 ÷ 2 free spirit powers (pp. 79–81, **Grimoire 2**) when they become free, usually Aura Masking, Hidden Life and Sorcery. Because they are already bound to a physical form, grande zombies cannot possess the powers of Animal Form, Human Form or Possession.

A grande zombie suffers from Essence Loss (p. 220, **SR2**), losing a point of Force every month. To sustain itself, the spirit must consume human or metahuman flesh every month, replenishing its physical body. Grande zombies are often quite intelligent (unlike loa zombies) and cunning, finding various ways to sustain themselves without attracting attention to their activities. In New Orleans, the organ-trade and various voudoun sects provide grande zombies with plenty of opportunities to feed. Grande zombies sometimes infiltrate or control packs of ghouls in order to feed more easily.

Loup Garou

The loup garou is a human infected with a strain of the Human-Metahuman Vampiric Virus (HMHVV). The virus alters the host considerably: short, gray-black fur covers the body, the canines become pronounced, the lips draw back from the teeth and fingernails harden into claws. The loup garou is only barely intelligent, but it has an animal cunning. It lives as a scavenger most of the time, save for a peak period of 4 to 6 days out of every 28 when it becomes a ravening monster, attacking and killing any creature it can.

New Orleans and most other municipalities offer a bounty of 1,500 nuyen or more for each loup garou killed. They are considered a public health hazard and are actively hunted. Anyone coming in contact with a loup garou (such as anyone wounded by one) may become infected with its strain of HMHVV. A successful Body (6) Test is required to prevent infection.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
4 (6)	4 x 4	7 (9)	—	3/4	4	5	4 (6)	+1D6 (+3D6)

Attacks: 7M (9M)
Powers: Enhanced Physical Attributes (Strength, once per day for (Essence)D6 turns), Enhanced Senses (Thermographic Vision)
Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Severe), Allergy (Aconite or Horseradish, Severe)
Note: Statistics in parentheses refer to the creature at peak power.

Nutria

A possum-sized rodent with sharp orange teeth and a vicious disposition, nutria can be found throughout New Orleans and the surrounding area—as common as rats are elsewhere. They usually attack in packs of up to thirty, preying on other animals and even small or helpless humans and metahumans.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
1	3 x 3	1	—	1/3	1	6	4	+1D6

Attacks: 5L (bite)
Powers: Concealment (self only), Immunity to Pathogens, Immunity to Poisons
Weaknesses: None
Note: There is a 1 in 6 chance that a nutria is a carrier for VITAS-3 (a result of 11 or 12 on 2D6). Any time a character is bitten by an infected nutria, roll 2D6. On a result of 9 or more, the character has contracted the disease.

Specter

A specter is a hostile ghost able to affect the physical world to some degree. Specters are able to manifest like elementals and nature spirits and have various paranormal powers at their command. Each specter has a Force rating like any other spirit and uses its Force for all astral tests and in astral combat. Some person or object must serve as a specter's anchor to the physical world. As long as its anchor exists, the specter is immune to banishing and can only be disrupted in astral combat, returning in a number of days equal to 28 minus the specter's Force. Many specters have some task they wish to see completed, after which they vanish forever. Other specters are driven by nothing more than an apparent hatred for living things.

Specters with domain-based powers can use them only in the particular place the specter haunts: a graveyard, old manor house, abandoned alley and so on. Some very powerful specters have abilities equivalent to those of free spirits (p. 76, **Grimoire 2**), including having a Spirit Energy score, which increases by gaining karma, and possessing various Free Spirit powers (particularly Hidden Life, Possession and Sorcery).

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
F+1	F+2 (x3)	F–2	F	F	F	(F)A	F+1	+1D6

Attacks: Special
Powers: Immunity to Normal Weapons, Manifestation. Other powers vary but may include: Accident, Compulsion, Confusion, Fear, Noxious Breath, Paralyzing Touch (or Howl) and Psychokinesis
Weaknesses: Some specters exhibit an Allergy to certain things significant to their living selves.
Note: The statistics above refer to the specter in manifest form. In astral form use Force for all tests.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for Crescent City-based adventures.

Mafia Zombies

It starts out as a tricky but doable job: the runners are hired by a representative of the Mossino Mafia family to get a bio-sample from Pamela Rodenbush so her parentage can be more clearly determined. The Mossinos want to know where they stand with the heir apparent to Dona Kozlowski. The problem is that Pamela is nabbed before the players can get to her. The Dona blames the runners (she noticed their interest in her "heir"), as do the Mossino family for failing to do the job (and possibly double-crossing them). The runners are caught in a crossfire.

When Pamela shows up about a week later, the runners are off the hook, but something is not right. Pamela doesn't seem interested in anything anymore—she's lifeless and easily distracted, carrying all the signs of being a "living dead" or biological zombie. A fight begins over the beautiful, but zombified, Pamela. Don Carlo "Silverhand" Mossino wants to remove her from the Mafia's hierarchy completely, Dona Kozlowski wants her "heir" back to normal, and the Zobops who are responsible want to bring the Mafia down from within. It's up to the runners to discover who is responsible and why, and if Pamela can be cured (or if it's even really her). At the same time, the conflict forces the runners to pick a side ... knowing that whichever one they choose will come with two very powerful enemies. Enemies that play for keeps.

Rebel With A Cause

The runners are hired to escort a shipment of weapons coming down the Mississippi into the outskirts of New Orleans, where they will meet up with a smuggler working with the Yucatan rebels in Aztlan. The runners' Johnson, an arms dealer named Santiago, goes along for the trip to close the deal. He has the team hide the crates of weapons with some friendly Cajun allies in bayou territory outside the city before going to the meet.

The meeting turns out to be an Aztechnology sting operation to capture gunrunners and trace the illegal weapons back to their source. When the team's Johnson is killed by Aztechnology agents, the runners have to find a way to escape and keep the Azzies off their backs long enough to unload the weapons on someone else. The runners can sell out to Aztechnology (which won't do their reputations any good), or they can try to set up

another deal with the real Yucatan rebels, which won't be easy with corporate agents watching their every move. If the runners can get the weapons to the rebels, the revolutionaries will be suitably grateful, but the team will end up on Aztechnology's drek-list.

Voodoo Moon

The player characters are hired to make their way through the bayous to meet with an old voudoun houngan. They have to travel through miles of swampland infested with dangerous critters like hellbenders, devil jack diamonds, snakes, crocodiles and other swamp beasts. The houngan is the sole occupant of an old plantation/manor house in the bayou that is slowly being consumed by the swamp. He tells the runners that his ancestors were slaves on the very same plantation and that the mistress of the plantation back in colonial times was a dabbler in magic who forced occult secrets from some of her slaves who possessed knowledge of voudoun.

The manor is haunted by her spirit, a powerful specter known only as "La Malice," which has reappeared and grown in power since the Awakening. The old houngan is dying and wants to banish the specter before his time is up so that it cannot trouble anyone again. He needs the runners to find the specter's anchor, lost in the ruins of an old graveyard in the bayou not far away, so he can use it to banish her. He offers them a collection of silver and gold coins and antiques, all family heirlooms, as payment—along with a magical item or two if the gamemaster wishes. The specter, of course, has no intention of being banished. She is quite powerful, equal to a Force 6 free spirit with Spirit Energy 2 and the Sorcery power. La Malice also controls a pack of ghouls living in the bayou and uses them to attack the runners.

RUNNING IN VLADIVOSTOK

The following section provides the gamemaster with details for running a campaign in Vladivostok, whether it involves smuggling, "normal" shadowrunning or other activities. This section also includes information regarding working within the Russian network of shadowrunners as well as adventure hooks, rules and new critters from the Awakened land of Siberia.

LOCAL COLOR

The following sections describe elements that gamemasters can use to create a sense of place and give a unique flavor to Vladivostok.

East Meets West

Vladivostok has often been referred to as the "San Francisco of the East," due not only to its steep hills but also to its cosmopolitan, multiethnic and multiracial composition. The city is a mixture of Muscovite, Korean, Chinese and Siberian ethnic groups, as well as a large influx of metahumans fleeing from racial persecution in Japan. In many ways, Vladivostok can be thought of as the Russian version of the Seattle metroplex: a frontier town on the Pacific Rim, where different cultures converge and intermingle.

Vladivostok possesses a diverse atmosphere that can make dealing with contacts and fixers interesting, to put it mildly. There are some old-school Russian fixers who see nothing wrong with meeting in a bathhouse or walking into a restaurant at noon and talking about business with no regard for who might be listening, while some Korean fixers prefer high-tech countersurveillance and seek to control the entire meet, down to the simplest hand movement. The gamemaster must understand that in Vladivostok, no two individuals do things the same. One fixer may live miles from Vladivostok on her farm—filled with the latest Japanese cyberdecks and programs—while another fixer within the city limits may have a warehouse filled with old Chinese, Russian and even American tanks from the various wars in the past century. There are no standard cultural, ethnic or business rules in Vladivostok. Downtown, some places will make the runners feel they are in the center of the most modern, up-to-date areas of Europe, Seattle or Japan, while a mere few blocks away the characters may feel as if they were transported back to the 1920s during the founding of the Soviet Republic.

Police State

Russia has a long history of totalitarian rule, and the secret police of Russia have maintained their infamous reputation throughout history. Though the state has become much weaker in recent years and Vladivostok is now an open city, the long-standing air of paranoia still pervades Russian society.

There is real fear of the police among the citizens of Russia, leading to an aggravated level of suspicion in the shadows of Vladivostok—everyone suspects everyone else. Informants are the norm, everyone has secrets, and the various police organizations use those secrets to get people to do their bidding—often finding out more secrets in the process. Oddly enough, "the honor amongst thieves" maxim that keeps Seattle and the shadow-communities in other cities "free" doesn't exist in Vladivostok. Most criminals cut deals with the police in order to keep themselves in business. If they sell a secret to the police, the police look the other way regarding their own criminal activities. This is the Russian Way. Players unfamiliar with this style of doing business will find themselves hunted not only by the law, but also by their criminal "allies" looking to make a big score.

The MVD is the federal police force, and this organization uses its public presence to intimidate would-be criminals. The UGB, on the other hand, is a covert intelligence agency, and so any encounters with the UGB should be shrouded in secrecy, deviousness and duplicity.

Though suspicion is an important characteristic of working in Russia, gamemasters should try not to overdo it. Vladivostok is far, far away from Moscow and surrounded by all manner of hostile forces. The MVD and UGB cannot afford to keep close tabs on the Vladivostok shadows, as they have more urgent matters to take care of.

Russian Inefficiency

Used to centuries of living under totalitarian state rule, Russians are not used to the Western way of life and have adapted very clumsily to the rest of the world. Consequently, inefficiency, corruption and intimidating bureaucracy are rife within Russian daily life.

In Russia, bribery is expected for virtually all public services, from garbage disposal to electrical power to telecom connections, and many things Westerners take for granted (electricity, running water, Matrix connections and so on) aren't necessarily available all of the time. While shadowrunners (particularly SINless ones) might be accustomed to this way of doing business, even they might be rudely surprised at the sheer inefficiency of Russian society.

Any characters using the Etiquette (Corporate) Concentration must add a +1 modifier to all target numbers to account for the backward nature of Russian business practices.

THE SIBERIAN WILDERNESS

Vladivostok is a successful smuggler's haven primarily because of its proximity to Awakened Siberia. The abundance of natural magical resources in Vladivostok can make a smuggler very rich, provided she survives not only the border patrols but also the strange wilderness of Siberia. Even native Russians consider Siberia a strange and mysterious place.

Most of Siberia is covered with taigas, deep, thick forests of pine and other temperate-climate trees that cover the mountains and river plains like a blanket. Much of the wilderness has been untouched by Russian civilization, and those areas that have been tamed still retain the jagged edge of Siberia's feral nature. Much like Amazonia or the Mojave Desert, Siberia is a living, growing place where only the strong survive.

Spirits

Very much like the Mojave Desert, Siberia is abundant with spirits. Because of this, spirits summoned in Siberia are strong-willed and independent, and they openly resent being bound into performing services. A spirit summoned here will be angered at being enslaved, perform its services with extreme reluctance, and look for every opportunity to break free. If its summoner is somehow weakened, it may even turn on him.

Some Siberian tribal shamans have learned how to negotiate with these spirits for favors, which means they often find themselves doing the spirit's bidding.

Spirits also have a tendency to manifest at will in Siberia, without being summoned. Usually, a spirit manifests spontaneously to protect its domain, though each spirit may have its own motives. Some have exhibited an ability to use the Free Spirit power of Animal Form (p. 79, **Grimoire 2**). All standard rules for manifested spirits apply; for suggested motivations, see p. 76, **Grimoire 2.**

Background Count

Most of the Siberian wilderness has a Background Count of at least 1, and some places such as Lake Baykal, the Tunguska Crater or the Valley of Geysers have a Background Count of 2 or 3. The background count is aspected (see p. 104, **Awakenings**) against conjuring, so all Conjuring Tests in Siberia are made at a target number equal to the desired spirit's Force plus the background count.

The Siberian wilderness also has a Power Site Rating (see pp. 103–4, **Awakenings**) that fluctuates between 1 and 3. This acts as additional magic pool dice for magicians who are "attuned" to the area (usually only Evenk and other tribal shamans). The gamemaster may adjust these numbers up or down as needed.

Whenever the gamemaster has determined that the background count and/or the power count of an area has a rating of 2 or higher, then the rules for Mana Surges (p. 82, **SRComp**) must be used. These rules always apply at Lake Baykal, the Tunguska Crater or the Valley of Geysers.

Talismongering in Siberia

The magical strength of the Siberian taiga has empowered a variety of telesma material sought after by talisleggers and magicians. Materials such as pine wood, minerals, herbs, precious metals and even exotic materials (shapeshifter fur, Tunguska mutated plants) can be gathered for telesma and may even reduce the base time for refining and artificing by 25 to 50 percent (round up) at the gamemaster's discretion.

Rudnaya Pristan

The harbor of Rudnaya Pristan is a toxic domain, corrupted by run-off from boron and bauxite strip mines from the nearby town of Dalnegorsk. In addition to toxic spirits, this corruption has also attracted several mutated paracritters to live in or near the area. Rules for mutated and toxic creatures appear in the **California Free State** sourcebook (pp. 147–49).

SIBERIAN SHAMANISM

Siberian magicians generally practice shamanism, which has striking similarities to Native American practices. (In fact, the word "shaman" derives from "saman," the word Siberians used to describe their holy men.) Typical totems include Bear (sometimes Polar Bear), Raven, Spider, Reindeer (same as Stag), Horse, Tiger (same as Puma) and Wolf. There are also abundant rumors of shamans following more unusual totems, such as Elk, Fox, Fenrir, Polecat and Wolverine.

NEW CRITTERS

The following represent some of the more common Awakened critters that can be found in the area in and around Vladivostok. Gamemasters can use them to create adventures in the wilderness areas outside the city as well as livening up urban-based adventures with a critter encounter or two. The column labeled INT indicates the dice to be rolled and added to the Reaction per standard Initiative rules (p. 79, **SR2**).

Descriptions of the powers possessed by the following critters can be found in **Shadowrun, Second Edition** (pp. 214–19) and **Predator and Prey** (pp. 88–96).

Baba Yaga

A spectral spirit-creature, the baba yaga (also known as Likho or Greedy Mogus) appears as a sinewy, gnarled, bloodless old woman with white hair. Some seem to manifest with only one eye. They are solitary and appear only nocturnally and in isolated forest locations. When manifest, the baba yaga has been known to consume metahuman flesh, behaving in a way similar to the wendigo in its use of the Essence Drain power.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
5	5	5	2	5	7	8(A)	10/20	+1D6

Attacks: 7M, Special
Powers: Accident, Compulsion (Zone x 2), Darkness, Enhanced Senses (Smell), Essence Drain (Temporary), Fear (Zone x 2), Glamour, Immunity to Age, Immunity to Cold, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Immunity to Pathogens, Immunity to Poisons, Magic Sense, Manifestation, Paralyzing Touch
Weaknesses: Allergy (Sunlight, Mild), Essence Loss (1 point per month)
Notes: Some baba yaga may have one or more of these additional powers: Cold Aura, Confusion, Enhanced Physical Attribute (Strength, twice per day for Essence x D6 turns), Magic Resistance, Sorcery. The baba yaga must consume flesh to use its Essence Drain power. The first number under Reaction refers to a manifest baba yaga, the second is its Astral Reaction.

Siberian Firebird

A larger, more potent cousin of the North American firebird, the Siberian version has golden feathers that are greatly valued as telesma material. The Siberian variety grows to a larger size (2.5-meter wingspan, 2-meter length), is carnivorous and displays more Awakened powers. Firebirds have been known to use their Accident and Desire Reflection powers on those who seek to collect their feathers, giving firebird feathers a reputation as cursed in some circles.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
4	6 x 3	4	—	3/4	3	(6)	6	+2D6

Attacks: 8M
Powers: Accident, Desire Reflection, Fire Resistance, Flame Aura, Movement, Search

Woolly Mammoth

A creature long thought extinct, reports of live woolly mammoths began emerging from Siberia around 2015. Some Siberian tribesmen are reported to have trained the animals for riding, and they were allegedly used in the Russian-Siberian War.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	
12/4	5 x 5	12	—	1/4	4	6	4	+1D6

Attacks: 7D, +1 Reach
Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Enhanced Senses (Low Light Vision), Enhanced Movement, Immunity to Cold, Regeneration
Notes: Woolly mammoths are not affected by illusion spells.

King Frost

King Frost (sometimes called Crackle Frost or just Frost) is a solitary, mischievous and sometimes malevolent prankster spirit creature. It has been reported as appearing in several forms, though this has not yet been verified and these different forms may in fact be separate spirit types. Such forms have included whirling snow, a man made of ice and a pale white woman. The spirit often makes a crackling noise, like breaking ice, when using its powers.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
5	6 x 3	3	4	5	5	6 (A)	15/25	+1D6

Attacks: 5S

Powers: Accident, Cold Aura (Zone x 2), Engulf, Immunity to Cold, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Immunity to Pathogens, Immunity to Poisons, Magical Resistance, Manifestation, Movement, Petrification, Silence (Zone x 2)

Weaknesses: Vulnerability (Fire)

Notes: The first number under Reaction reflects a manifest creature. The second number is the creature's Astral Reaction.

Humped Horse

The humped horse has spread throughout Siberia, eastern Russia and Mongolia since the Awakening. Its durability and magical abilities make it the preferred horse for many tribesmen, though it is difficult to train. The horse has two raised humps on its back, similar to a camel.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
8	6 x 6	6	3	4/4	4	6	5	+2D6

Attacks: 6S

Powers: Adaptive Coloration, Animal Control (Equines), Binding, Enhanced Movement, Guard

Siberian Bee

Bee-keeping was historically practiced by several Siberian ethnic groups, but the practice had nearly died out when the Awakening mutated a new, larger bee with a preference for electromagnetic fields. These large bees tend to build their hives near transformers, generators and other sources of power. They are able to perform a sort of group-based electrical attack.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
2	5 x 3	1	—	1/3	2	6	5	+2D6

Attacks: 4M Sting, Venom

Powers: Electrical Projection (see below), Enhanced Senses (electromagnetic), Immunity to Pathogens, Immunity to Poisons, Venom

Notes: Quickness multiplier for flying is 5. Ten or more bees may take a Complex Action to launch a single Electrical Projection attack against one target. These bees may not project again for D6 turns.

Tungak

Known by many different names to different ethnic groups, the tungak is commonly regarded by Siberians as a sickness spirit responsible for causing all colds, diseases and infections.

B	Q	S	C	I	W	E	R	INT
2	6 x 3	2	2	5	5	6 (A)	15/25	+1D6

Attacks: 4S

Powers: Blindness, Darkness, Immunity to Cold, Immunity to Normal Weapons, Immunity to Pathogens, Immunity to Poisons, Noxious Breath, Pestilence (see below)

Notes: The first number under Reaction reflects a manifest creature. The second number is the creature's Astral Reaction. The tungak's Pestilence power may be used to infect the target with any disease the gamemaster desires, including VITAS 3. Some tungak may have one or more of these additional powers: Alienation, Confusion, Essence Drain (Permanent).

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for Vladivostok-based adventures.

Here Kitty, Kitty

A group of talisleggers based in Vladivostok plans a run into Siberia to gather telesma, and they hire the runners as extra security for the expedition. The runners and smugglers must sneak inside Siberia and into a location that one of the talisleggers identifies as rich in telesma. The talisleggers need five days to properly collect materials in this area.

During those five days, the runners must protect the group from a variety of paranimals and Siberian patrols. One cold night, whoever's on watch spots an old, cloaked woman moving through the forest. She appears to be completely harmless and friendly, but is in fact a baba yaga, and will attempt to lure one of the runners away from the rest of the group and eat him or her. She will continue to return each night for another victim, until driven away or destroyed.

If the characters keep a close eye on the talisleggers, they will notice that two of them are acting a bit suspiciously. They frequently slip away on their own and wander off far and wide, as if hunting for something. On the fourth night, they sneak out of camp. If the runners follow, they discover the two have set an ambush for something. However, the runners' arrival has alerted the target—a large Siberian tiger—and the animal manages to get away.

The two talisleggers are actually undercover UGB operatives, and they are using the operation to gather intel on smuggler methods and also to attempt to kidnap a Siberian shapeshifter for questioning and experiments. The UGB suspects the Siberians of using shapeshifters as spies and saboteurs. The tiger shapeshifter takes serious offense at being attacked in this way, and later that night, the runners' camp will be set upon by a pack of wolf shapeshifters. Other Siberians will also be alerted to their presence and will attempt to sabotage the runners' vehicles. Getting out of the country with telesma, shapeshifter prisoners, or at all will be quite difficult, especially if any internal dissension arises among the talisleggers.

Toxic Dreams

The characters are hanging out in a shadier portion of the docks in Vladivostok, Petropavlovsk or some other port in the region, when a small boat comes into the harbor and charges right

toward them. Whether or not they are quick enough to get out of the way, the boat crashes into the docks and explodes, sending debris everywhere.

If the runners search for survivors, they pull a dying dwarf out of the wreckage in the water. He has obviously been shot several times and lost far too much blood to survive. As a crowd forms around them, he pulls a GPS unit out of his pocket and weakly hands it to a character. Drooling blood, he manages to spurt out: "My ship ... micro ... naut ... *gasp* ... attacked ... *cough* ... sink ... *gurgle* ... or ... caulk ... um." And then he dies.

Immediately, rumors start spreading through the crowd, across the docks and into the shadows. The dwarf is identified as a well-known smuggler named Ajax who was running a pirate crew on a ship named the *Micronaut*. They had just recently headed out for a Seattle run. Now there are rumors running rampant that they were carrying orichalcum, or perhaps that they were attacked and sunk by the Russian or Japanese navy, and that the characters are the only ones with the coordinates to their wreckage.

If the runners don't exit the scene, the MVD will show up shortly and take them in for "questioning." If they realize the importance of what they might be carrying and immediately take off, within an hour the runners will be mobbed—all kinds of people want that GPS. The UGB has taken an interest, Ajax's friends want to avenge his death, and a slew of opportunists want to buy it, steal it, or pry it from the characters' cold dead fingers.

If the runners manage to get out of town in one piece and head toward the coordinates, several teams will attempt to track and pursue them to the coordinates in the GPS memory—smack in the middle of toxic Rudnaya Pristan. The *Micronaut* is there at anchor, though listing slightly.

What the characters may eventually discover is that the *Micronaut* hid in the harbor to avoid a naval patrol. They attracted the attention of a toxic water spirit with unusual powers that used its Desire Reflection and Influence powers to turn the crew against one another and fight over loot that didn't exist. The scene aboard the ship is gory—only one dwarf crew member remains alive, and she's been influenced to see any intruders as flesh-form bug spirits (of which she has a phobia). Others will arrive shortly after the runners, eager to claim a load of orichalcum, and the toxic spirit will begin using its abilities to create friction and hostilities.

Knock Knock, Land Shark

The runners are hanging out in a bar in Vladivostok when a soldier from the kawaru-gumi (metahuman Yakuza) approaches them for a quick job. He hasn't seen his partner in more than a day, but he doesn't have the time to search for him right now and wants to send the runners looking in case he's in trouble (the partner is a large troll of Japanese origin). He offers a healthy amount of nuyen for one night's work.

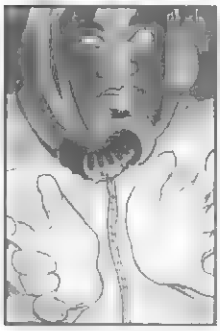
Depending on whether they search the slums or the downtown area, they'll either find the troll just waking out of a stupor or run into Vory thugs who are looking for the troll as well. They claim the troll recently smashed up a gambling den and attempted an assassination of tzarina Kovalenka. Unfortunately for the troll, he was under the effects of a possession spell cast by a Yakuza Shark shaman. The shaman is attempting to instigate a

Vory versus kawaru-gumi war by possessing various soldiers and striking out at the others. So far, the shaman's plan is working.

After the runners get the troll back to his gumi, they are taken to a restaurant to meet with the oyabun of the kawaru-gumi and explain what they know. While there, the restaurant is suicidally rammed by a heavy truck carrying flammable material. Again, the Vory driver had been possessed, but the shaman pulled out at the last minute.

The chain of attacks and possessions will continue as the yak shaman tries to draw the Triads and Seoulpa Rings into the fray as well. It will be up to the characters to figure out the possession trick and track down the real instigator. They may be clued in if they catch a possessed person in the act and witness him fall into a frenzy in combat (as Shark shamans are wont to do), then suddenly fall unconscious and not remember anything upon waking.

RUNNING AN UNDERWATER ADVENTURE



Off the Deep End (beginning on p. 55) provides the basic information about the cutting edge of undersea colonization and experimentation. These unique locations can provide interesting and unique adventures gamemasters may wish to toss at jaded players and experienced shadowrunners. While corporate intrigue and sabotage may seem to be the most logical way to involve shadowrunners in undersea adventures, high-seas piracy and smuggling adventures as described in the **Cyberpirates** sourcebook are equally as common.

Underwater bases are usually located in deep seas many, many miles from a nearby port, so characters will need some type of seafaring vessel to reach their target, preferably one capable of underwater travel (in other words, a submarine). Cyberpirates involved in piracy or smuggling adventures are more likely to gain access to such vessels than ordinary shadowrunners.

This is not to say that a regular shadowrunner campaign that wants to take a break from sprawl-crawling is out of luck for undersea adventures. If a Johnson is desperate enough to hire a shadowrunner team to break into an undersea base, then she'll also find a way to get the runners out there. Perhaps she can arrange voyage for the player characters on a corporate-chartered ship. Or maybe one of the character's contacts happens to know a pirate gang. Gamemasters should not make it a *difficult* problem for characters to find transportation, especially if they work out of a port city like the Seattle Metroplex.

PORTS OF CALL

One important thing to remember about the undersea places mentioned here is that they are, in all likelihood, very far from the player characters' home city. The characters aren't likely to simply fly in directly from Seattle (or wherever their home city may be). Almost certainly, if characters conduct any adventures in any of the areas described below, they will establish a local base of operations in a port city that borders that area.

Throughout the chapter, **Off the Deep End** makes brief references to port cities in the vicinity of the areas of interest. These are not complete descriptions of the individual cities or countries mentioned, nor are they meant to be. Characters will likely be staying within the city for a few days at the most, primarily to perform legwork, collect intelligence on the underwater site they're interested in and gather supplies.

The focus of an underwater adventure is on the undersea world. Doing legwork at a local port of call is a necessary evil for maintaining the adventure, so the gamemaster should use the city primarily as a backdrop to provide local color. Alternately, the port city can be fleshed out more and used as a staging area for a piracy campaign or a stint of shadowrunning in a foreign land.

SITUATIONAL BRIEFING

The following brief summaries, themes and hints for each of the different places described in **Off the Deep End** offer the gamemaster a starting point for creating adventures and setting them in these unique locations.

Undersea Cities and Dunkelzahn's Will

One important theme that runs through several of the undersea places described is the reward offered in Dunkelzahn's will to the first organization to set up an undersea community (p. 32, **Portfolio of a Dragon: Dunkelzahn's Secrets**). According to the will, the Draco Foundation will award five million nuyen to the person or organization that establishes a self-sustaining undersea city containing one hundred or more residents.

To date, no one has met these conditions. Most of the likely undersea sites are either too small or are not self-sufficient. This gives the gamemaster the opportunity to let the players in on the action when such an event does occur. The player characters may help someone achieve this lofty goal, or they might prevent someone from reaching it! While megacorporations may not actually need the cash, the public relations coup they might garner from such a bounty would be priceless. Smaller corps may be shooting at the money to recoup their initial expenses and pay back investors. The gamemaster can decide what each corporation is going for when they begin such an adventure.

The Sea of Japan

The events in the Sea of Japan tie in very closely to the sudden power shift at Yamatetsu (as described in the Yamatetsu track in **Blood in the Boardroom**). Yamatetsu, which supports a number of small undersea facilities focusing on undersea agriculture and marine biological research, had been consolidating its undersea operations into one aquacology in order to meet the requirements of Dunkelzahn's will.

Unfortunately, the sudden ascension of Yuri Shibanokuji as director and the unexpected decision to move the corporate headquarters to Russia have put those plans on hold. Intent on profiting from Yamatetsu's turmoil, Shiawase and Mitsuhama, which also have significant undersea holdings, have been trying to get the drop on Yamatetsu's project.

Undersea adventures in the Sea of Japan will probably revolve around this aspect of the corp war, as Shiawase and Mitsuhama try to steal Yamatetsu's underwater secrets and holdings, while Yamatetsu attempts to hold them off as it gets its house in order. Korea is the backdrop for this struggle, because it is easier to hire shadowrunners from port cities on the Korean Peninsula than from the stratified society that is Imperial Japan.

North Atlantic

Of all the known organizations competing to establish the first underwater city, Proteus AG, a second-tier European corporation, is the closest to achieving this goal. It would have done so already except for certain technicalities upheld by the Draco Foundation. But by filing its claim prematurely, Proteus has invited some unwelcome spying from other competitors seeking the same prize, curious to see (and copy) what Proteus has done, as well as to figure out what this relatively unknown corporation is up to.

At the same time, the North Atlantic is a battleground between eco-activists and pirates on one side, and European megacorps on the other doing their usual business as well as drilling for oil, gas and minerals. While the agenda of the corps is fairly typical (make money), those of the eco-activists are more complex—though many pirates are also just in it for the money. Curiously, the Klabauterbund have recently all but dropped out of the scene due to some internal turmoil, possibly caused by infiltration by the apocalyptic group Winternight.

The many ports in this area offer a plethora of job opportunities for runners, from smuggling to espionage to piracy to bounty hunting.

UNDERSEA SECURITY

Because of the special nature of the undersea environment, aquacologies and other undersea bases must often employ special security measures to compensate for factors that would invalidate normal security measures. Listed below are rules for employing certain special undersea security measures.

Video Cameras

Because of the light-absorbent effects of water, normal video cameras cannot detect anything beyond a range of 150 meters. Blue-light cameras have a longer range of 250 meters, but they impose a +1 modifier to Perception Tests as a result of the marginal quality of the monochrome image. Use of low-light amplification with normal or blue-light cameras doubles the detection range.

Passive Sonar Systems

Underwater security systems sometimes use sonar systems to monitor the surrounding area. The sonar systems used are the same as those for ships, except that aquacology sonar systems do not have active sonar capability.

When using sonar to detect swimming divers, use the sonar rules in the **Cyberpirates** sourcebook (pp. 168–69). Divers have a Sonar Signature of 4, but ships using sonar to detect divers receive a +4 modifier, because their sonar systems are specifically configured to detect other ships.

Underwater bases and aquacologies may be detected by passive sonar due to the background noise they produce. Sonar Signatures for aquacologies vary from 1 to 6, depending on the nature of the facility: underwater mines, oil rigs and power stations will have a Signature of 1 to 2, while marine biological research stations and farms will have a Signature of 3 to 5. Covert bases will have a Signature of 6, or possibly even higher.

Ultrasonic Sonar Systems

Ultrasonic sonar works differently from normal sonar. Rather than following the normal sonar rules, use the sensor rules from **Rigger 2** (pp. 27–32). Ultrasonic sonar may have any Sensor Rating, but they have a maximum Flux Rating of 1.

Using Drones Underwater

Due to the absorbent effect of water, drones cannot operate farther than ten meters from their remote control decks, unless they are connected to the deck via a cable (see p. 168, **Cyberpirates**). In that event, the drone's maximum operating distance is determined only by the length of the cable.

During combat, there is a slight chance that a cable may get snarled during maneuvers. At the end of every turn, roll 2D6. If the result is less than 2 (or whatever number the gamemaster may deem appropriate), the cable has become snarled. The drone suffers a –10 modifier to its Maneuver Score until the snarl is untangled. Untangling a snarl takes a full Combat Turn, and the drone can take no actions other than untangling the snarl.

Free-ranging drones, as mentioned in **Off the Deep End,** are capable of operating without a cable because they receive commands from numerous signal transmitters planted at specifically calculated distances. Resolve drone operations as normal, but if the drone wanders outside its designated patrol area, its carrier signal is lost and it is disconnected from the remote control network.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following adventure ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for undersea-based adventures.

Hook Me Up

Through the Matrix, the characters are hired to help perform an extended run on an offshore Mitsuhama facility. The job involves running cover for a group of techs who are secretly going to hook up power and Matrix lines (the cables are already laid and connected to a nearby "abandoned" rig—the Johnson just wants to subtly restart power and communications). Sophisticated maps and data on the site's security are provided. The site itself is above-water but connected to the ocean floor by a complex superstructure (similar to an oil rig). The team will be airlifted to a rendezvous with a sub at open sea, which takes them and the techs to the target zone. Once close to the target, they will approach via Mitsuhama Anago underwater sleds (p. 178, **Cyberpirates**).

The runners are responsible for getting past security and into the underlying (above-water) framework of the installation, where the techs can spend several days analyzing the setup and jury-rigging their pirate feeds. The runners merely do overwatch, making sure MCT security doesn't become alerted to their presence in the rig's superstructure.

The first problem comes when the runners discover—the hard way—a tribe of merrow living under the facility as well. They've set various traps, and at first they will view the team as having invaded their turf.

Several hours before the job is done, the merrow accuse the characters of causing the deaths of several merrow, who seem to

have been poisoned in some way. Unless the runners can convince the merrow they had nothing to do with the deaths, the merrow will prevent them from leaving the installation until the team "fixes" the problem. Investigating characters discover an underwater living module attached to the lowest part of the installation. This structure is a leftover component of a discontinued undersea research facility, moth-balled and forgotten. It still contains a large number of containers of toxic research materials, including poison in liquid and gas form. An exploring merrow accidentally damaged one or more of these containers, which are now leaking into the sea. The player characters will need to stop the leak and secure the living module in order to satisfy the merrow that the danger is ended. If the characters fail to notify MCT about the potential need for a cleanup operation and word gets around, an organization like Save Our Seas may learn of the situation and rough up the characters for turning a blind eye to the situation.

Back Door

Numerous corporations have taken a much stronger interest in Proteus AG's activities since their attempt to win Dunkelzahn's prize. The Draco Foundation itself has become quite intrigued by the corp, especially given some of what they learned during their inspection tour. While inside the undersea project, they also discovered a method of inserting a team inside the arkoblock covertly—through an automated supply sub.

The runners are approached by a reputable fixer who represents an anonymous client. This Johnson wants the runners to break into a Proteus facility in Bremen and get onboard an automated supply sub that will take them to an arkoblock. Once inside, they are to proceed to the lower (undersea) levels and check out the "test domes." The Johnson is looking for any information regarding structure, power, sustainability and funding sources, but is particularly interested in the research down below.

Proteus security will be tight, and so the need to run a completely covert operation should be a strain on the runners. Proteus also inspects the subs at both ends, so the runners will need to create distractions or otherwise circumvent discovery. Inside the sub, among other main supplies, the runners will discover a dozen comatose metahumans, drugged up and slotted for experimentation. Inside the spooky arkoblocks, after dodging a variety of drones and security systems, they will find the test domes in the lowest levels. Here they will be able to gather data on Proteus's experiments into immunizing metahumans against radiation, vacuum and (de)pressurization, and extreme cold, as well as their research on better cyberware systems for air tanks, bone replacement and magnetic limbs. Much of their testing is being performed on unwilling victims. Several experiments seem directed toward crossbreeding metahumans or duplicating paranormal animal abilities in these hapless victims.

Once out of the nightmare, the runners are stopped in Bremen on their way to meet with the Johnson. The Green Cells have heard about the run through a source of theirs within the Draco Foundation, and they want to obtain the info the runners recovered. The Cell is willing to buy or trade for the information, but will resort to nonlethal force (magic, tasers, and squirts) if the runners refuse to surrender it.

RUNNING LAND SMUGGLERS

For both gamemasters and players, land routes are often given the standard plot device treatment: "pick up the stuff at Dock 75 and two days later drop it off in Portland." Maybe there's a skirmish at whatever border, or an ambush at the drop-off or pickup, and that's it. Unfortunately, this treatment falls far short of what could be an exciting, fun and unique type of shadowrun.

LAND VERSUS SEA

Land-route smuggling is a different ball of wax from sea-based smuggling. In most cases, the route is well-established and the plan is to draw as little attention as possible and get there in one piece. In contrast, the basic operation for sea-based smuggling requires the pirates do the legwork to find their prey, steal the goods, hope they make it into port before they are attacked by other pirates, and then find a dock that will have someone willing to pay a decent price for their goods. Land-based smuggling can seem dull in comparison. Usually, the sale has been arranged in advance, and the smuggler just has to get the goods there safely and on time. Except for gangs and border crossings, there's usually little worry about attacks. The law is sometimes a concern but also tends to ignore you if you blend in and aren't doing anything overtly wrong. The land smuggler is usually paid based on the speed of his operation and the lack of heat generated by his actions.

In addition, the land-based smuggler doesn't want attention the way many of the sea-based pirates crave it. It is not necessary to make a public statement on land. Reputation is used for acquiring work, not for scaring potential victims or competitors. To make the drop-off intact, without the law even knowing you exist, requires secrecy, stealth and deception. Aggressive, violent tactics will get you dead, imprisoned, or worse. The more heat you generate, the less work you will get. It's that simple.

THE LONG HAUL

The routes covered in **Smuggling on Land** (beginning on p. 78) tend to get the most traffic in North America. The basic thing to remember is that North America is a big place. From Seattle to Minneapolis may take a couple of days, and then the trip to New Orleans as much as two or three more—even with multiple drivers and no sleep. It's possible to make the run in much less time, especially if you're a rigger and take a route with no speed limits. Riggers, however, tend to dote on their vehicles, refusing to let anyone else drive or pilot them. Many also tend to drive alone, but as much as they hate to admit it, even they need metahuman contact every so often.

In **Shadowrun,** characters usually play as a team, which means that the rigger isn't alone. Of course, more people means more stops, from tourist traps for the people out of the sprawl for the first time to gun shops for the mercs and telesma-rich locations for the mages. While such excursions have less impact than direct conflict, the gamemaster can use various players' desire to stop to set up

some interesting roleplaying situations in small towns. Yes, outside the sprawl there are people who have rarely (if ever) seen an actual troll or dwarf or cyberware or mage. They may react with awe, fear or hate. Or perhaps they once had some smugglers shoot up the town and are wary and paranoid of anyone from the outside. Or they may welcome smugglers because the last one bribed them well to keep their mouths shut. Others may see the runners as candidates for a profitable robbery, or resent them for being flashy, big-spendin' sprawlfolk, or may view them as a ride out of their hellish small-town life and into the big time.

Charisma, Persona and Bribes

The point of being a smuggler is not to get noticed, especially in small towns with nosy law officers or in places you aren't supposed to be, like the Native American Nations. There are ways to get around such obstacles, of course, the most basic of which is bribery. Big tips for the waitress, contributions to the County Sheriffs' Retirement Fund, pornsims for the grease monkey who made the necessary repair, and even cheap Seattle and corporate goods passed around (especially sports paraphernalia) all work wonders. Gifts, especially unexpected ones, open doors and allow the players to control the action. Spread the wealth and you'll have many friends. Heck, they may even defend you if the heat comes down.

Such generosity is a sort of necessary evil that adds to your visibility but helps obscure your trail at the same time. On the other hand, being just plain mysterious gets you the privacy you want but at the cost of arousing people's suspicions. Suspicious people ask too many questions, and they have a bad tendency to spread rumors—which can be quite damaging in smaller towns. Before a character knows it, he or she might be charged with or accused of stuff that happened before he arrived or after she left.

Much like contacts, local stops that are friendly toward the player characters can become havens in times of need. It's important to keep up such good relations and remember to pay back debts and favors.

The Law

It has been said that no matter how fast you go, you can't outrun a radio. That's important advice when most of a trip is across one country like the UCAS. It is also said the law has a long memory. Just because a player character cleared the border doesn't mean the law won't be looking for him when he gets back. Many of the smaller and more rural places have the same set of officers for years. They remember the time fifteen years ago when a character blew through town, caused a fight in the local watering hole and ran off with somebody's daughter. A character can be a model citizen, but they'll watch him like a hawk and use the slightest pretext to haul his hoop in for "questioning" or "cooling down."

These guys are not the Lone Star or Knight Errant shoot-first-scrape-you-up-later type of cops. Many of them are old-school—doing it to protect their people or doing it because they believe in what the laws stand for. Most of these guys will act like the sheriffs of western movies. They are the last line of defense for the little guy, miles from the "big protection" of the state or the corporation. Sure, some may be despots controlling their little territory like insane kings, but others are actually honorable and just. The gamemaster can use both types to keep players off balance.

Most of these nonsprawl law types won't go gun to gun with the characters. They probably know they can't win—and they can always call in a state SWAT team if necessary. They prefer "quiet" solutions ... some way in which they don't lose face. Possible solutions might be an apology and paying for damage, or some cops might want a night in jail or a "court appearance" and a fine. They may let the characters go without any of those things—but they'll spread the word about the team's behavior to cops down the road. If the runners are rampaging through small towns like they're out of control, or start a high-speed chase, they'll eventually run into an ambush set up by some big boys (Knight Errant, Lone Star, UCAS Guard) who have been called in for damage control.

The Borders

The most dangerous part of any smuggling operation is crossing national borders. This is where the gamemaster can go nuts—military response, active and aggressive countermeasures, running shoot-outs, all-out dogfights and chaos. Border crossing is flagrantly illegal, and such a maneuver makes the characters an instant target: proved guilty, convicted and prepared to receive their sentence.

The Sioux, Aztlan and Tir borders are the most heavily patrolled, and the gamemaster has total control over the level of force with which those governments react. In most cases, they prefer full force because any successful smuggler makes them look weak. On occasion, they have been known to let a smuggler through in order to convince smugglers that a soft spot in their coverage has been found. When traffic starts to increase, they perform a massive crackdown, catching as many smugglers as possible in one fell swoop. A smuggler's best chance of successfully crossing one of these borders is through stealth, guile and trickery—going toe to toe with the military is a very bad choice.

The UCAS, CAS and many of the other NAN nations have "open" borders. If a character looks like he belongs, they won't harass him. If he is caught breaking the law, it doesn't matter who or what he was doing—he has no SIN, he has no business being there and he has very few rights because he legally doesn't exist. Such a character is prime meat for those experimental cyber-handcuffs.

The exception to this "open" border is Denver, where governmental paranoia runs amuck. Here a decker or fixer is more important in many ways than the rigger because they can provide the right passes and papers to travel and get by. Border guards in Denver are cranky and suspicious on their good days, and tend to assume that everyone is a bad guy. While much of their hostility is reserved for the border guards on the other side of the fence, they save enough to get nasty with runners, too. If a character is running from one country's sector and crosses into another, she can count on the border guards to shoot anyone chasing her (including the police/military), but don't count on them letting her go. Depending on their mood, they may let her walk to slot off the forces chasing her, or they may take her out just to rub it in their faces.

The Wild Cards

The gamemaster's job is to make a smuggler's run interesting (and challenging, of course). When smugglers burn rubber out of the sprawl, they open the door to all kinds of encounters that they'd never come up against in an urban setting. Besides the small-town and rural mentality, there are survivalists, paracritters, free spirits, dragons and wyverns, gangs, pockets of outsiders (ghoul communities, vampire covens, magical hermits), corporate locations that never appear on any map and even military maneuvers and "war games." Rural and remote does not necessarily mean the smuggler has escaped from civilization—countless corporate agribusinesses dominate rural communities and the surrounding countryside, reaping the benefits of "factory farming." Such enclaves would feature enough security to keep out trespassers and marauders. The dregs of society also make their way out of the sprawl in the form of toxic waste dumps, established far from prying eyes. Everything and anything ever mentioned in a **Shadowrun** product can be found out there somewhere. Gamemasters can easily make land routes interesting and unique, with no two routes and no two runs ever being the same.

Failure

Delivering the goods and getting paid is the crux of any smuggling operation. There may be other stipulations for receiving payment, such as time elapsed and the condition of the goods, but the basic rule is to get the goods to the destination. Anything else is a failure. Failure is not good, or profitable. But like anything else, there are degrees of failure.

Dying or getting caught are probably the worst things that can happen to a smuggler. Getting caught has many potential side problems—many governments love catching smugglers and planting agents in their place to catch the buyer and infiltrate the organization. This can be real bad for a character's rep, and even if he escapes he'll find that he not only can't get hired but that he is also being actively hunted for narking out his contacts.

On a lesser note, having cargo stolen or swapped is more embarrassing than dangerous, depending on the cargo and the intended buyer. A smuggler's rep (and money) depends on hunting down whoever stole from or double-crossed him or her. Similar to a mystery movie of days gone by, such an event might force the characters to go on a cross-country trek to find who set them up or to get back their stuff.

SMUGGLING TO EVERYONE

While the routes listed in **Smuggling on Land** are the main, established routes, smuggling can really be to anywhere that someone needs or wants something. If the gamemaster prefers to set up smuggling runs into and out of a city that doesn't appear in this book, or to a part of the world in which his runners already operate, he should feel free to invent new routes that trade in whatever makes sense. While weapons, cyberware and electronics are the most popular items of trade and will always have a buyer, if there is any sort of demand there should be someone willing to pay top cred to a smuggler for it—be it fruits and vegetables going to Anchorage in the Athabaskan Council or water into Los Angeles. Everything is fair game, and with the Mafia and various gangs struggling for power and position, the smuggling won't stop.

SPECIAL RULES FOR LOW-ALTITUDE VEHICLES (LAVS)

An LAV (more commonly known as a thunderbird or t-bird) is a type of aircraft that relies primarily on directed jets of thrust for motivation rather than aerodynamic lift (such as from wings). By generating lift and thrust this way, a LAV can maneuver in relatively tight terrain, carry heavier amounts of armor than normal aircraft and still maintain a relatively fast speed.

In most militaries, LAVs fulfill a number of air cavalry roles (namely forward screening, economy-of-force and breakthrough-exploitation missions) as well as short-range close-air support. The amount of armor an LAV can carry allows it to shrug off the worst damage from most anti-aircraft guns and surface-to-air missiles, though LAV armor will not stop an antitank weapon. Fortunately, ground-based antitank weapons generally perform poorly against aircraft, especially a moderately fast mover like an LAV. On the other hand, a t-bird's worst nightmare is an airborne tank-killer such as an attack helicopter armed with antitank guided missiles (ATGMs).

Because of their design, LAVs operate under some special limitations. For example, t-birds cannot fly higher than 1,500 meters above the ground. Additionally, its landing/takeoff profile and stall speeds operate under some unique rules.

Takeoff/Landing Profile

A t-bird has a VSTOL (Very Short Takeoff and Landing) profile, which means it needs a very short runway to take off and land (approximately 120 meters for takeoff and 240 meters for landing). This profile is based on operational considerations rather than technological limitations. T-birds can make a VTOL landing or takeoff (Vertical Takeoff and Landing), but doing so generates an excessive amount of downward jet blast on the landing area. This jetwash in turn ends up causing damage to nearby personnel (namely support crews) and equipment, and it makes it more difficult for a pilot to land the t-bird or take off. The runway requirement, therefore, is a safety precaution for the vehicle and supporting ground crew.

If a t-bird pilot needs to make a VTOL takeoff or landing, she must make a Piloting Test for taking off or landing on unusual surfaces (p. 36, **Rigger 2**). In addition to other modifiers, apply a +1 modifier for this special situation. If the test fails, the t-bird automatically acquires 2 points of vehicle Stress (p. 25, **Rigger 2**). The takeoff or landing otherwise proceeds as normal.

Additionally, any exposed personnel or equipment within a fifteen-meter radius of the t-bird must resist blast damage from the wave of hot jetwash. Characters must resist 8M Physical damage. Impact armor applies against this damage, but characters cannot use Combat Pool dice to aid in the Damage Resistance Test. Additionally, any vehicle with a Body of 2 or less must also make a Damage Resistance Test if it is within the fifteen-meter blast zone. However, the damage reduction rule for vehicles applies, so vehicles only have to resist 8L damage.

Further, characters within the blast zone must make a Body (4) Test unless they are wearing helmets incorporating special hearing

protection (crew and flight helmets for aircraft incorporate this type of hearing protection). Failing the Body Test results in partial hearing loss, and the affected characters receive a +1 modifier to hearing-related Perception Tests. Note that cyber-ears with the dampener modification (p. 247, **SR2**) do NOT count as adequate hearing protection in this case; the air turbulence from the jetwash simply exceeds the cyberware's design limitations. (Fortunately, cyber-ears can always be replaced.)

Stall Speed

Though the engines of a t-bird allow it to levitate at a relatively low altitude, they do not have enough power to provide both lift and forward thrust. To compensate, t-birds mount short, stubby auxiliary wings (such as canards) to provide supplemental lift at high altitudes. However, these auxiliary wings do not provide that much lift, and so a high-flying t-bird has a high stall speed.

When flying very close to the ground, a t-bird gains some auxiliary lift due to ground-effects air cushioning (the same method of lift that keeps hovercraft floating a few centimeters off the ground). Consequently, a t-bird does not need to rely on its auxiliary wings and so does not have a stall speed.

In game terms, the stall speed of a t-bird applies only when the vehicle is flying at a height of 75 meters or higher. If a t-bird is flying at an altitude lower than 75 meters, the stall speed does not apply.

Keep in mind, however, that a t-bird flying below 75 meters is hugging the ground and must also abide by the same terrain type and restrictions as ground vehicles (see below).

FLIGHT CEILING TABLE

Aircraft	Flight Ceiling (In meters)
Thunderbird*	1,500
Zeppelin	4,000
Helicopter**	6,000
Jet Propeller (Single engine)	6,000
Jet Propeller (Twin-engine/Airliner)	10,000
Jet Turbine Fixed-Wing Aircraft	12,000
Fighter Aircraft	20,000

* Includes jump-jet fighters operating in vectored-thrust mode.

** Includes tilt-wing aircraft operating in autorotation/hover mode.

OPTIONAL VEHICLE RULES

The following additional rules apply to special circumstances that may occur during t-bird smuggling runs. These optional rules cover flight ceilings for aircraft and low-altitude or nape-of-earth flight.

Flight Ceilings

Aircraft can only fly up to certain heights due to limitations of their design. The highest altitude an aircraft can achieve is called its flight ceiling. The Flight Ceiling Table lists various flight ceilings for different types of aircraft.

LAVs, zeppelins and helicopters that attempt to rise above their flight ceilings simply cannot generate the lift necessary to rise higher and so will stop rising at their flight ceilings.

If a fixed-wing aircraft attempts to fly above its flight ceiling, the engines will stall and the plane will begin to plummet. The pilot must make a Piloting Test, using the plane's Handling Rating as the target number, to restart the engine before the plane crashes. The pilot can make only one Piloting Test per Combat Turn but may make as many Piloting Tests as possible to restart the engine before crashing.

Nape-of-Earth (NOE) Flight

Nape-of-earth (NOE) flight is the act of flying aircraft at very low heights. At these low altitudes, pilots can make use of the earth's terrain to hide from air-searching radar; on the other hand, pilots are much more likely to crash.

An airplane is flying NOE whenever its altitude drops below 100 meters (except for drones, which are flying NOE at a height of 20 meters or less), and its terrain type is considered to be the same as that for ground vehicles. An aircraft flying NOE also receives an additional +1 modifier to Sensor Tests against it, in addition to relevant ground terrain modifiers (p. 28, **Rigger 2**). However, because the aircraft is flying so close to the ground, a pilot must make a Crash Test (pp. 51–52, **Rigger 2**) *anytime* she fails a Piloting Test.

Sensor Dead Zones

Occasionally, natural terrain can mask objects from aerial sensors, particularly in the case of aircraft flying very close to the ground. These terrain points can create dead zones, pockets of space on the ground in which vehicles, characters, or other objects can hide from sensor detection.

If a gamemaster owns or has created a detailed topographical map of the area, then he or she is free to map out any dead zones that might occur along the player characters' travel route. (Dead zones usually appear behind sharp changes in terrain contour, such as behind bluffs, ridge lines, depressions, and so on.) Dead zones are included on the Border Crossing Random Encounter Table (p. 110), but the gamemaster may adjust any dice roll result up or down depending on extenuating circumstances, such as flight altitude, terrain type and so on.

A Sensor Dead Zone automatically prevents anything inside it from being detected by a Sensor Detection Test. Dead zones themselves also cannot be detected on a Sensor Detection Test. However, an astute character looking at a map or a terrain display on an Autonav System (Rating 3 or higher) can estimate where possible dead zones may lie. To do so, make an Intelligence (5) Test. (Characters with an appropriate Knowledge Skill of the local area may use that instead of the Intelligence Attribute.) Success on this test indicates where possible Sensor Dead Zones may lie. If the test was unsuccessful, however, then the character guesses inaccurately about dead zone locations (either by overlooking one or more dead zones or guessing that a dead zone exists where there is none).

Dead zones may also apply to submarines hiding in underwater canyons or crevasses. However, Sonar Dead Zones are much smaller and more infrequent in occurrence, due to the fact that sound waves diffract more readily than radar waves, and consequently "bend" slightly when cut off by a corner.

RUNNING THE BORDER

Whenever crossing a border, a smuggler risks being caught. Whether they are sneaking across, crossing "legally" and in plain view, or full-out jamming it, there's a chance for something to go wrong. Ideally, gamemasters will create encounters that generate sufficient tension and action and also serve to move the plot along. In a pinch, however, the tables below offer several methods of testing for detection and encounters during border crossings.

The Unauthorized Border Crossing Table provides typical Sensor Ratings for the various North American nations. These ratings are an abstract approximation of the numerous technological methods by which nations watch their borders: satellite imaging and recognition, radar nets, remote listening posts, mobile sensor trucks, airborne surveillance drones, and so forth.

Use this table whenever the characters attempt to cross a national border anywhere other than an authorized checkpoint. For both nations (on either side of the border), make a Sensor Test (p. 27, **Rigger 2**) with appropriate modifiers against the Signature of the vehicle being used. Use a number of dice equal to the nation's Sensor Rating, modified per the Sensor Ratings Modifiers Table (p. 109). Use the Random Factor modifier to represent the fact that the entire border cannot be monitored at the same effective level, and also to diversify the challenges faced on separate runs. If the characters are using ECM or ED electronic warfare (p. 31, **Rigger 2**) to hide and protect themselves, use the Flux, ECCM and/or ECD Rating of the nation to determine its effectiveness, applying any appropriate Flux Modifiers from the Sensor Ratings Modifiers Table. If a Sensor Rating is modified to 0 or less (or a Flux Rating below 0), the characters have lucked out and crossed through a zone not covered by sensors.

For underwater border crossings, the gamemaster should consult the rules for passive and active sonar detection in **Cyberpirates** (pp. 168–169) and determine what sort of test to make (if any).

Even if the characters escape detection, they are not yet off the hook. Roll on the Border Crossing Random En-counter Table (p. 110) to determine if they accidentally run afoul of any patrols, critters, dead zones or other situations. For particularly dangerous borders such as Pueblo or Tir Tairngire, the gamemaster may choose to roll twice, or in the case of Aztlan, three times.

If the characters are detected, the nation's adjusted Flux Rating can be used to benchmark how far out from the border the characters are detected (using the Flux Rating and Range Table, p. 31, **Rigger 2**). This distance may determine how the border defenses respond and what options the characters have. In most cases, a drone, patrol or interception team will be dispatched to investigate, depending on the country. Listed below are quick summaries of several nations' standard border patrol compositions. Gamemasters should feel free to alter these as they see fit to meet the needs of their games. Threat and Professional Ratings for standard border guards are provided on the Unauthorized Border Crossing Table. Interception teams are likely to be more loaded for bear than standard patrols, depending on what vehicle the characters are using and how they've responded thus far.

The **Algonkian-Manitou Council** typically uses nature spirits and watchers to patrol its borders, backed up by four-man patrols and the occasional shaman. Its borders are open as it has good relations with its neighbors.

The **Athabaskan Council** relies primarily on the radar-net and listening posts it inherited from the United States and Canada, but it also makes good use of aerial drones and patrols. Ground patrols, and in some cases water patrols, have been known to use paranormal animals. The border with the Tsimshian is closely guarded.

Aztlan goes all out, starting with a variety of paranormal animals and spirits. Ground patrols always consist of at least 20 troops and are well-armed and armored. Typical vehicles used are Ferrari Appaloosas, Liebre RPV drones, Tiburón patrol boats, Aguilar helicopters, Halcón attack aircraft and Lobo LAVs.

CAS fields three-man patrol groups accompanied by trained attack dogs. Astral coverage is weak to nonexistent. The CAS uses a multitude of vehicles, from Hawker-Siddley Skytrucks to Surfstar Seacops to Banshees. The border with Aztlan is monitored and semimobilized, but their other borders are more open.

The **California Free State** military is a mess and barely organized away from the Tir and Aztlan borders. The Imperial Japanese marine forces in San Francisco are quite prepared to deal with any unauthorized activity in a military fashion, especially seaborne intrusions.

In **Pueblo,** a stealth drone is sent to investigate any border disturbance. Response teams will be tailored to the size and apparent threat of intruders. All borders are heavily patrolled.

Quebec is very rabid in regards to border patrols. Typical patrols consist of two guards in a Patrol One, with aerial patrols performed by Yellowjackets. They make frequent use of a modified Cyberspace Designs Wolfhound drone, as well as Appaloosas, GMC Riverines, and modified Lone Star SWAT Hovertrucks.

UNAUTHORIZED BORDER CROSSING TABLE

Nation	Sensor Rating	Flux	ECCM	ECD	Threat/Pro. Rating
Algonkian	3	5	NA	NA	3/3
Athabaskan	5	4	5	NA	3/2
Aztlan	10	10	6	5	4/4
CAS	6	6	3	3	3/3
CalFree	3	2	3	NA	3/2
San Fran.	7	7	5	4	3/4
Pueblo	8	10	6	6	4/4
Quebec	7	8	3	NA	3/4
Salish-Shidhe	5	6	4	NA	3/3
Sioux	6	7	3	NA	4/3
Tir Tairngire	8	9	6	6	5/4
Tsimshian	5	7	3	NA	3/3
UCAS	7	7	4	4	3/3
Ute	3	5	NA	NA	2/2

SENSOR RATINGS MODIFIERS TABLE

Situation	Sensor Modifier	Flux Modifier
Hostile Border	+2	+2
Near Major City or Airport	+1	+4
Commercial Flight Altitude (1,000–15,000m)	0	+2
Very High Altitude (over 15,000m)	–1	–4
Low Altitude NOE (100–1,000m)	0	0
Nape-of-Earth Flight (less than 100m)	–1	–2
Land Travel	–3	–3
River or Lake Travel	–3	0
Sea or Ocean Travel	–1	0
Random Factors (Roll 2D6)		
2	–2	–2
3–4	–2	+0
5–6	–1	+0
7	+0	+0
8–9	+1	+0
10–11	+2	+0
12	+3	+2

Salish-Shidhe border patrols are standard four-man teams traveling in a light scout vehicle. In emergencies they call on the Salish Rangers, who typically use Citymasters, Appaloosas and Hughes Stallions. A Ranger team usually includes one mage or shaman.

Sioux Nation patrols are very similar to Salish-Shidhe patrols, though they make heavy use of Sikorsky-Bell "Red Ranger" Scout ACVs and microskimmer drones.

Tir Tairngire border patrols are exceptionally stealthy and magic-heavy. Usually composed of four- or six-person teams, lightly but efficiently armed, the patrols use spirits and detection magic. In a pinch they are backed up with a scout LAV.

Tsimshian patrols are rather mundane three-man units in light scout vehicles. Their air coverage is currently very weak.

UCAS patrols consistently use GMC Banshees and Northrup Yellowjacket minichoppers. Ground patrols frequently bring specially trained attack dogs.

Ute patrols are practically nonexistent, though Ute security forces make up for it with an elevated number of random traffic stops and ID street checks.

ADVENTURE IDEAS

The following ideas represent just a few of the possibilities for land-based smuggling route adventures.

Quick Recovery

The runners are hired by some Cascade orks to escort some of their smugglers hauling a shipment of goods from Seattle to Denver along the southern Big Dance route. The smugglers are using two Ford-Canada Bisons for the run, one to ship the goods and the other to carry the runners and a bit more (unless the runners have their own vehicle). If they check (and the orks will attempt to stop them), they'll find out that their cargo is mostly firearms (heavy pistols and smaller, no ammo) except for a nice sealed box of uranium. If opened or damaged, the uranium is quite hazardous, and there is enough of it to kill many people through radiation poisoning and cause a small, localized disaster.

The run gets well into Ute without a hitch. As the group takes a break at a truck stop or other remote location, a small group of stealthy and concealed go-gangers attempts to steal the truck. When (if) the runners discover them, the rest of their gang, the Red Rovers, hits the scene, causing as much chaos as possible, allowing the hijackers to escape with the truck. As the runners pursue, the rest of the Rovers will converge on them, road warrior-style, as they tear down the highway. The hijackers will pull off the road and cross a rickety bridge over a gorge, which they will then blow behind them. It will take the runners several hours to get their vehicles around the gorge and pick up the trail again.

When the runners catch up to the gangers, they find a massacre. It looks like the Rovers stopped for a quick camp, only to be attacked and slaughtered by something powerful. The Bison appears to have been driven away. As the runners prepare to leave, they are attacked by a pair of wyverns, apparently looking for dessert. Eventually the runners find the Bison—and its new tribal owners—right outside Salt Lake City. A small group of nomadic Wichita Amerinds found the Bison in the carnage the wyverns left behind and made it part of their caravan. They've been digging through the boxes in the back and have yet to find the uranium. The runners must figure out how to get the truck back. If they attack, the Ute Security Force moves in to hunt them down. If they bargain, the tribals are in need of medicines and basic supplies, which might require a run into Salt Lake City, where they'll be faced with a xenophobic Mormon-controlled city complete with strict antigun laws.

Arch Enemies

Wherever the runners may currently be located, a Johnson hires them to provide security on a shipment of rigger gear along the nearest route that leads to St. Louis. Mr. Johnson is willing to pay very well for discretion and complete security until the goods are delivered. The run to St. Louis goes relatively smoothly, with just a few small problems that well-placed bribes can easily take care of. Make it seem like a milk run for the characters.

When they arrive at the specified time at the drop-off point in St. Louis, the fixer and his entourage are there. Make it seem as routine as the rest of the run has been so far. The runners drop the pass phrase that Johnson gave them—and the pickup does not use the return pass phrase! Give the runners a moment or two to react, but if they suddenly freak, the impostors will spring an ambush.

Assuming the runners escape, when they contact Mr. Johnson he tells them to locate the real fixer the delivery was supposed to go to, whatever it takes. If the runners lost the goods, he wants them to retrieve his merchandise, too. When the runners

BORDER CROSSING RANDOM ENCOUNTER TABLE

3D6 Roll	High Altitude Crossing	Low Altitude Crossing	Land Crossing	Water Crossing
3–4	Special*	Special*	Special*	Special*
5–6	Flying Critter	Critter	Critter	Critter
7–8	Private/Corp/Cargo Craft	Dead Zone**	Fence/Natural Barrier	Pirates
9	None	None	Gang or Rural Cop	Private/Corp/Cargo Craft
10	None	None	Joe/Jane Citizen	None
11	None	None	None	None
12	None	Dead Zone**	None	None
13–14	Drone	Ground Patrol	Ground Patrol	Boat Patrol
15–16	Air Patrol	Drone/Astral Patrol	Astral/Drone Patrol	Astral/Drone Patrol
17–18	Fighter Squadron	Drone/Air Patrol	Air Patrol	Naval Ship

Note: Roll twice when crossing Pueblo or Tir border, and three times for Aztlan border.
* Special denotes something unusual: an accident, a dragon, fovae, a forest fire—go wild!
** Roll again and consult the Land Crossing column to see what the Dead Zone hides, but treat any result that seems unlikely to occur as a ground patrol equipped with mobile radar and surface-to-air missiles.

delve into the St. Louis shadows, they quickly realize that a smuggler war is going on. Everyone also seems to know that the runners are in town and wants a piece of their pie. They'll get all kinds of offers to relieve them of their burden, both friendly and most definitely unfriendly. Soon enough, they discover that their target fixer has already been waxed. When they contact Mr. Johnson, he tells them to sell to the highest bidder.

The rigger gear is completely SOTA and includes a variety of equipment from remote control decks to decryption modules to signal amplifiers, as well as rigger adaptation black boxes for vehicles. The haul is worth hundreds of thousands of nuyen. If necessary, Johnson will offer the team a small percentage to keep their loyalty.

At this point, the runners will become even hotter in the St. Louis underworld. Several factions, some of them backed by international syndicates (Yakuza, Triads and so on), will attempt to recruit, buy, or kill the runners. If the runners stick it out, they might eventually become a dominant force in the St. Louis smuggling scene.

Underworld Railroad

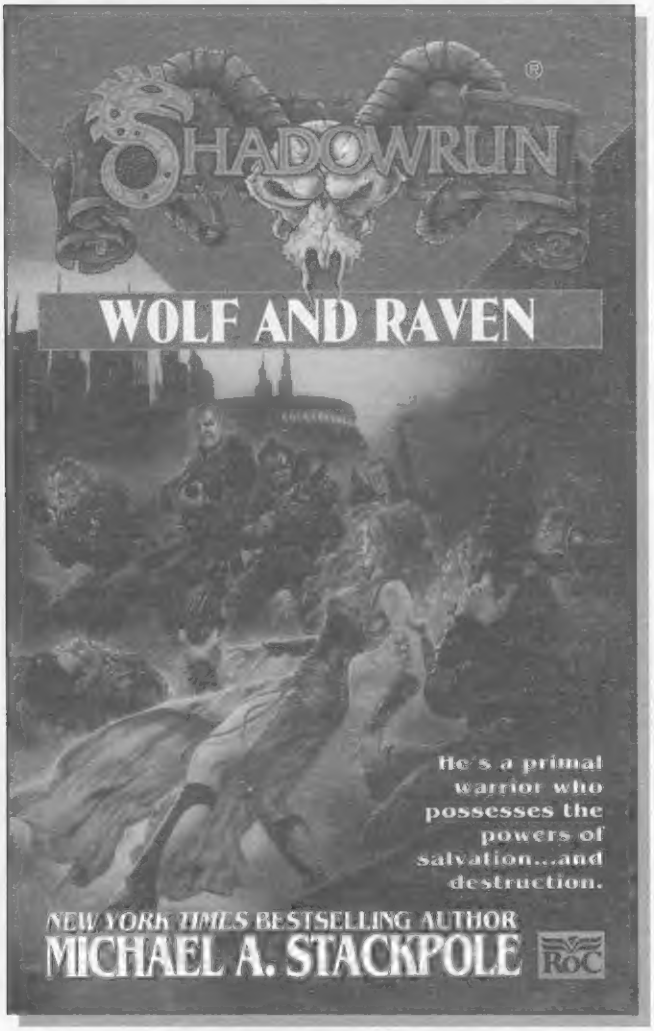
When the runners are in Detroit (for whatever reason), a man approaches them asking for assistance. He tells them his name is Traction and he's a smuggler from California. He's got a run to make to Milwaukee, but he's developed a bad case of unknown competition and someone trashed his wheels. He wants to hire the runners and their vehicle(s) to escort him to Milwaukee and help protect his cargo. He offers a hefty fee for a successful run. If the runners don't have an appropriate vehicle, he'll be willing to front the cash for one if they pilot.

If the runners agree, he arranges to meet them at a warehouse loading dock to pick up the boxes. It doesn't matter how much cargo space the team has—whatever they've got, he'll fill. If they ask what the cargo is, his answer makes it sound good. The less space they have, the more "valuable" the cargo will be.

In reality, Traction's boxes are filled with bricks. He's not really smuggling anything except himself. Traction's real name is Donny McAlister, and he's a Mafia soldier for Don Leo McCaskill of Milwaukee. He just ripped off Don "The Greek" Roland of Detroit big-time, and needs to get outta town ASAP. He's passing himself off as a rigger, but he only has a datajack and will feign broken cyberware or lack of the appropriate vehicle skill if the runners ask him to rig. Over time, his lack of vehicle knowledge and rigger lingo should become apparent to the team. Word has already hit the streets of a forty thousand nuyen bounty on McAlister's head.

As the team is loading up, or perhaps on their way out of town, someone happens to recognize Donny boy and opens up on them. Donny will try to explain it as his rival smuggler crew trying to hijack his haul. Later on, well into the run when the team is crossing the lake, or somewhere else in the middle of nowhere, law enforcement will attempt to pull the team over, search the vehicle, and arrest them. They have an APB out on Donny and the runners' vehicle(s), thanks to some friends of Don Roland. If the team gets arrested, they face the danger of being "shot while attempting to escape."

Until they get him safely into the don's hands in Milwaukee, the team will be plagued by bounty hunters, crooked cops and Mafia goons. If the runners seem to be weighing the risks and benefits of finishing the run versus collecting a much easier forty-thousand nuyen, Donny will make extravagant offers in an attempt to buy himself out of the situation. He is an accomplished liar and scoundrel, and will work the runners as best he can.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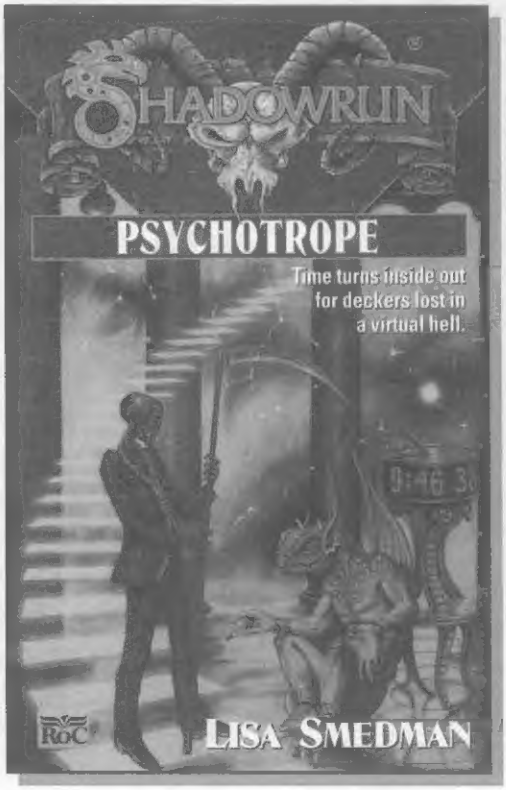

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